

Aristophanes' *Clouds*

Characters of the Drama

Strepsiades	Creditor
Pheidippides	Second Creditor
Slave of Strepsiades	Second Student of Socrates
Student of Socrates	Hermes
Socrates	Witness (non-speaking part)
Chorus of Clouds	Xanthias, Slave of Strepsiades
Just Speech	(non-speaking part)
Unjust Speech	

*[For the opening scene of the play, one side of the stage represents a bedroom of Strepsiades' house. Two or three statues of gods are visible. Strepsiades and his son Pheidippides are in their beds. At stage center, toward the back, a small, unkempt dwelling can be seen: Socrates' "think-ery." The time is night, just before dawn.]*¹

STREPSIADES *[sitting up in bed]*. Oh! Oh!

O Zeus the King, how long the nights are!

Boundless! Will day never come?

I heard the cock long ago,

but the servants are still snoring. They wouldn't have before.

Perish, then, O war, because among many other things,

now I can't even punish my servants!²

¹All stage directions and other remarks in brackets are by the translators. The Greek text contains nothing but designations of the respective speakers and the words spoken by them. This prose translation makes no attempt to imitate Aristophanes' poetic meter. However, the translation has been divided into distinct lines that correspond as closely as feasible to the lines of the Greek text.

²During the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta (431–404 B.C.), when the Athenian territory of Attica outside the city walls was frequently occupied by the enemy, slaves were easily able to desert to the other side.

[Points to Pheidippides.]

Nor does this upright youth here
wake up at night; he farts away,
enwrapped in five blankets.

10

But if it is so resolved,³ let's cover ourselves up and snore.

[He pulls the blankets up over his head and tries to sleep, but starts
tossing, and finally sits up again.]

But I can't sleep, wretched me, I'm being bitten—
by expenses and stables and my debts

because of this son of mine. He with his long hair
rides horses and drives a chariot,

15

and dreams of horses, while I am ruined
as I see the moon bringing on the twenties:

the interest mounts up.⁴ [Calls to a slave offstage.]

Boy! Light the lamp

and bring out the ledger so I can take it and read
how many I'm in debt to and reckon the interest.

20

[A slave enters with an oil lamp and slate, holding the lamp for Strepsiades
to read by.]

Come, let me see, what do I owe? "Twelve minae to Pasi-
as."

Twelve minae to Pasi-
as for what? What did I use it for?

It was when I bought the koppa-horse.⁵ Oh me, alas,
I'd sooner have my eye knocked out by a stone!

PHEIDIPPIDES [*in his sleep*].

Philon, that's unjust! Drive in your own course!

25

STREP. This is it, the evil that has ruined me.

Even in his sleep he dreams of horsemanship.

PHEID. [*asleep*]. How many courses will the war-chariots drive?

STREP. You're driving me, your father, many courses!

But "what debit hath come"⁶ on me after Pasi-
as?

30

"Three minae to Amynias for a chariot-frame and a pair of
wheels."

PHEID. [*still sleeping*].

Give the horse a roll and lead it home.

³*Ei dokei*, literally "if it seems (fitting)." The word *dokei* ("it seems to [the people of Athens]," i.e., "it is resolved . . .") was used at the beginning of enactments passed by the Assembly.

⁴The "twenties" were the last ten days of the month. Interest on loans was typically collected monthly and fell due on the last day.

⁵A koppa-horse is probably some sort of thoroughbred, branded with the letter koppa (our Q) to designate his pedigree. In the next line the word for "knocked out" is *exekopēn*, with a pun on *koppa*.

⁶These words are probably quoted from a lost play of the tragic poet Euripides.

STREP. My dear, you've rolled *me* out of my belongings,
now that I've been losing lawsuits and now that others are saying
they'll have my property seized for the interest.

PHEID. [*now awake*]. Really, father! 35
Why are you upset? And why do you twist and turn⁷ the whole
night?

STREP. Some sort of public official is biting me from the
bedclothes.

PHEID. Let me have a little sleep, you daimonic⁸ man.
[*Goes back to sleep.*]

STREP. All right, sleep! But know that these debts
will fall, all of them, on your head. 40

Oh, would that the matchmaker might perish evilly,
she who stirred me up to marry your mother!
Mine was a rustic life, most pleasant:
squalid, unswept, lying down at random,
teeming with bees and sheep and olive-cakes. 45

Then I married a niece of Megacles the son of Megacles.⁹
I was a rustic, she from the town:
classy, luxurious, aristocratic.¹⁰

When I married her, I lay down together with her,
I smelling of new wine, fig crates, wool, abundance, 50
she in turn of perfume, saffron, kisses with the tongue,
expenses, gluttony, Colias, Genetyllis.¹¹

But I certainly won't say she was idle; she *did* weave.
And I would show her this cloak
as an occasion and say, "Woman, you weave too closely."¹² 55
[*The lamp goes out.*]

⁷"Twist and turn" translates the verb *strephein*, from which Strepsiades' name is formed. Other occurrences of "twisting" or "turning" (the word can also mean "cheating") are found at lines 88, 335, 434, 450, 554, 776, 792, 1455.

⁸As an address, "daimonic" usually conveys a sense of ironic reproach. A daimon may be an offspring of divine and human parents, or, as sometimes in this play and elsewhere in Greek poetry, a god may be called a "daimon." On the daimonic, see *Apology* n. 37.

⁹Megacles ("famed for greatness") is a grand, aristocratic-sounding name that belonged to several members of the venerable Alcmeonid family. There was a wealthy Megacles of this family living in Athens when the *Clouds* was produced.

¹⁰"Aristocratic" translates a word meaning, literally, "Coisyriified." Coisyra is the name of a real or legendary aristocratic woman of the sort described here, probably the mother of Megacles, which would make her the grandmother of Strepsiades' wife.

¹¹Colias is the name of an Athenian temple for Aphrodite, goddess of love; Genetyllis is a minor love-goddess who is associated with Aphrodite Colias.

¹²"Weave" (*spathan*) is literally "pack down the woof with the blade." When the thread is packed too tightly, it is wasted. Thus the expression "weave too closely" means "be extravagant," "waste money." We may guess that the cloak that Strepsiades holds up is old, thin, and perhaps full of holes.

SERVANT. There's no oil in our lamp.

STREP. Oh me! Why did you light the drunkard lamp?
Come here, that you may weep!

SERVANT. But why should I weep?

STREP. Because you put in one of the thick wicks.¹³

[*The servant keeps out of reach and runs inside.*]

After that when this son here was born to us—

60

to me, yes, and to the good woman—

we railed at each other over his name.

She was for adding *hippos* to the name—

Xanthippus or Charippus or Callippides¹⁴—

while I put in for Pheidonides,¹⁵ after his grandfather.

65

So for a while we disputed it. Then, after a time,

we got together and settled on Pheidippides.¹⁶

She would take this son of hers and fondle him, saying,

"When you are big and drive a chariot to the city,

like Megacles, wearing a festal robe. . . ." ¹⁷ But I would say,

70

"Rather, when you bring the goats away from the rocky ground,

like your father, clad in leather. . . ."

But he wasn't persuaded by my speeches at all:

he's been pouring horse-itis upon my money.

So after thinking all night about a way out,

75

now I've discovered one straight path, daimonically preternatural,

and if I can persuade *him* to it, I'll be saved.

But first I wish to wake him up.

How could I wake him most pleasantly? How?

[*He goes over to his son's bed and coos sweetly.*]

Pheidippides! Pheidippiddy!¹⁸

PHEID. [*waking up*]. What, father?

80

STREP. Kiss me and give me your right hand.

PHEID. [*does so*].

¹³Strepsiades threatens to beat his servant because the thick wick makes the lamp "drunkard," i.e., guzzle too much oil. The point is that Strepsiades can barely afford oil for his lamp.

¹⁴These names formed from *hippos* ("horse") have a proud tone. Athenian aristocrats were called *hippeis*, "knights": horsemanship was a traditional badge of wealth and authority.

¹⁵Pheidon means "thrifty" (the name of Strepsiades' father: line 134); Pheidonides is "offspring of Pheidon."

¹⁶Pheidippides: "thrifty horseman," an oxymoron, like "stingy big-spender." According to some manuscripts of Herodotus, Pheidippides was the name of the Athenian runner sent to Sparta to ask for military aid when the Persians landed at Marathon (n. 162). He ran 150 miles in two days, but the Spartans sent no help until after the battle was over (VI.105).

¹⁷She refers to the Panathenaic festival honoring Athena, when the rich would ride in their saffron robes up to the "city," i.e., the acropolis. See n. 72.

¹⁸The Greeks sometimes added a diminutive ending to a name, indicating endearment or fawning.

There. What is it?

STREP. Tell me, do you love me?

PHEID. [*stands up, gesturing toward a statue of the god*].

Yes, by this Poseidon of horses!

STREP. Please, not by this god of horses, in no way!

For he is responsible for my evils.

85

But if you really love me from the heart,

my boy, obey.¹⁹

PHEID. What should I obey you in?

STREP. Turn your own ways inside out as quickly as possible:
go and learn what I will advise.

PHEID.

Speak, what do you bid me?

STREP. And will you obey at all?

90

PHEID. I will obey, by Dionysus.²⁰

STREP. [*pointing to the house at the back of the stage, which is now fully visible in the growing light of dawn*].

Look over here, now.

Do you see that little door and little house?

PHEID. I see them. So really, what is it, father?

STREP. That is a thinkery of wise souls.²¹

In there dwell men who by speaking

95

persuade one that the heaven is a stove

and that it is around us, and we are charcoals.²²

If someone gives them money, they teach him

how to win both just and unjust causes by speaking.

PHEID. Who are they?

¹⁹The Greek word for "obey" (*peithesthai*) is the passive of the word "persuade," and may also mean "be persuaded." See also line 119.

²⁰As the god of banquets and of the vine, Dionysus is a compromise between the horse-man's Poseidon (83) and the farmer's Demeter (121) (Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* [New York: Basic Books, 1966], p. 13).

²¹"Thinkery" is *phrontisterion*, coined by Aristophanes on the model of such words as *dikasterion* ("law court," from *dikē*, "justice"). "Think-tank" is an alternate translation. Words with this *phron-* root occur frequently in the *Clouds*, and they are translated consistently with "think" or "thought" although they also convey the sense of "worry." See *Apology* n. 8. "Soul" (*psychē*), in popular usage, may also mean "ghost."

²²If the Socrates of this play holds the doctrine that Strepsiades attributes to him, he may have learned that heaven is like a stove (*pnigeus*, a dome-shaped oven for baking bread) from the minor philosopher Hippon (so says a medieval *scholium* or explanatory note in one of the manuscripts) or from the astronomer Meton (Aristophanes, *Birds* 1001). The philosopher Heraclitus compared men to charcoals in the following way: just as charcoals glow when filled with fire and turn black when fire is withdrawn, so we partake of "the common and divine logos" when the things surrounding us come into our mind through the passages of the senses—less when asleep, more when awake. (Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* [16th ed.; Dublin: Weidmann, 1972], A16.)

STREP. I don't know their names precisely. 100
Pondering thinkers—noble and good men.²³

PHEID. Ugh! Villains, I know. They're boasters,
pale, shoeless men that you're speaking of,
and among them that miserably unhappy Socrates and Chaere-
phon.²⁴

STREP. Now, now, be silent. Don't say anything foolish. 105
But if you have any concern for your father's barley,²⁵
give up your horsemanship and for my sake become one of them.

PHEID. I wouldn't, by Dionysus, not even if you gave me
the pheasants that Leogoras is raising.²⁶

STREP. Go, I beseech you, dearest of human beings to me, 110
go and be taught.

PHEID. And what shall I learn for you?

STREP. It's said that they have two speeches,
the stronger, whatever it may be, and the weaker.
One of these speeches, the weaker,
wins, they say, although it speaks the more unjust things. 115
So if you learn this unjust speech for me,
I wouldn't give anyone back even an obol²⁷
of those debts that I owe because of you.

PHEID. I won't obey, for I wouldn't dare to see
the horsemen after I've lost my complexion.²⁸ 120

STREP. Then by Demeter, you won't eat of *my* belongings,
not you yourself, not your chariot horse, and not your
thoroughbred!

I'll drive you out of my house to the crows!²⁹

PHEID. But my uncle Megacles won't let me go horseless!
I'm going inside, and I won't give any thought to you! 125
[Exit Pheidippides into the interior of the house.]

STREP. But neither will I stay down, even if I have taken a fall.
After I pray to these gods here, I will be taught.
I'll go into the thinkery myself.
[He sets off toward the thinkery, but along the way he hesitates.]

²³"Noble and good men": see *Apology* n. 19. In the *Clouds*, *kalon* is always "noble" or "beautiful."

²⁴Chaerephon: see *Apology* 21a and n. 27 there.

²⁵Barley: i.e., your father's daily bread, his livelihood.

²⁶Pheasants were rare in Athens, and only a very rich man like Leogoras (father of the orator Andocides) could afford to keep them.

²⁷Obol: a small Athenian coin, one-sixth of a drachma (*Apology* nn. 46 and 72).

²⁸Pheidippides anticipates that he would lose his manly horseman's tan by spending time studying indoors.

²⁹"To the crows!" is a Greek imprecation meaning something like "To the dogs!" or "Go hang yourself!"

Now how, since I am an old man, forgetful and slow,
am I going to learn the splinters of precise speeches? [*Pauses.*] 130

One must go. [*Starts again, then stops before the door.*]

Why do I keep hanging back like this
and not knock on the door? [*Knocks.*] Boy! Little boy!³⁰

STUDENT [*within*].

Throw yourself to the crows! Who is it that knocked on the door?

STREP. Strepsiades the son of Pheidon, from Cicynna.³¹

STUDENT [*opening the door*].

Unlearned too, by Zeus, for you've 135

kicked the door so very unponderingly
that you've made a thought I had discovered miscarry.

STREP. Forgive me, for I dwell far off in the country.

But tell me the matter that's miscarried.

STUDENT. It's not sanctioned to say, except to the students. 140

STREP. Be bold and tell me now. For I've come
here to the thinkery as a student.

STUDENT. I'll tell you, but you must believe these things are
Mysteries.³²

Just now Socrates was asking Chaerephon
how many of its own feet a flea could leap. 145

For after biting Chaerephon on the eyebrow,
it jumped onto Socrates' head.

STREP. How did he measure it?

STUDENT. Most shrewdly.

He melted some wax, then took the flea
and dipped two of its feet into the wax; 150

as it cooled, Persian slippers³³ grew around them.

He took these off and was measuring the space.³⁴

STREP. O Zeus the King, what subtlety of the wits!

STUDENT. What, then, if you should find out another thought of
Socrates?

STREP. What? I beseech you, tell me. 155

³⁰Expecting a slave to answer, Strepsiades calls out "boy" in the usual Greek manner. But the Socratics, who have to steal their dinner if they are to eat at all (175–179), are too poor to keep slaves.

³¹Cicynna is the name of the *deme* or neighborhood division of Attica where Strepsiades was born. (Sphettos, line 156, is the name of another *deme*.) Strepsiades introduces himself as though reporting to the authorities.

³²"Mysteries" are religious rites, knowledge of which was permitted only to initiates. In the Platonic dialogues Socrates frequently applies the language of Mystery-initiation to philosophy: e.g., *Symposium* 209e–212a, *Phaedrus* 250c–d.

³³"Persian slippers" (literally, "Persians") are a kind of female footwear.

³⁴The student seems to mean that Socrates was carefully measuring the space occupied by the flea's foot in the wax "slipper" when Strepsiades knocked and spoiled the attempt.

STUDENT. Chaerephon from Sphettos was asking him which notion³⁵ he held: do gnats hum through their mouth or through their behind?

STREP. What, then, did he say about the gnat?

STUDENT. He declared that the gnat's intestine is narrow, and because it is slender, the breath goes violently straight to its behind. There the anus, hollow where it lies near the narrow part, resounds from the violence of the wind. 160

STREP. Then the gnats' anus is a trumpet. O thrice-blessed for intestinal insight! 165
How easily would a defendant escape the penalty if he thoroughly knew the intestine of the gnat!

STUDENT. But lately he was robbed of a great notion by a lizard.

STREP. In what way? Tell me. 170

STUDENT. As he was investigating the courses and revolutions of the moon and was gaping upwards, a lizard (it was night) crapped on him from the roof.

STREP. [*laughing*].
I'm pleased by a lizard crapping on Socrates.

STUDENT. Yesterday evening we had no dinner. 175

STREP. Well, well. Then how did he contrive for barley?³⁶

STUDENT. He sprinkled fine ash on the table, bent a meat-spit, then taking it as a compass he made away with the cloak from the wrestling school.³⁷

STREP. Why then do we wonder at Thales?³⁸ 180
Open up, open up the thinkery, hurry, and show me Socrates as quickly as possible, for I'm going to be a student! Open up the door!
[*The student opens the doors, revealing the courtyard of the house, where the students are discovered in various odd poses.*]

Heracles! Where do these beasts come from?

STUDENT. Why do you wonder? What do they seem like to you? 185

³⁵"Notion" is *gnomē*, a prominent term in the *Clouds*. It is sometimes translated "judgment."

³⁶Barley: see n. 25.

³⁷Scholars disagree about what it is that Socrates did. The point seems to be that he succeeded in his "attempt to supply his starving group with a frugal dinner by cleverly executing an act of petty theft while pretending to do geometry" (Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, p. 14).

³⁸Thales is believed to have been the first Greek philosopher and was popularly admired for his great wisdom, both theoretical and practical.

STREP. Like the Laconian captives from Pylos.³⁹

[*Observing one group in an attitude of deep thought.*]

But why ever are these over here looking down at the earth?

STUDENT. They're investigating the things beneath the earth.

STREP. Then it's vegetable bulbs.

[*Addressing them.*] Don't give it any more thought now,

for I know where there are big and beautiful ones.

190

[*Turning to another group with their heads fixed on the ground and their behinds in the air.*]

But what are they doing over there who are so stooped over?

STUDENT. They are delving into Erebus under Tartarus.⁴⁰

STREP. Why then is the anus looking at the heaven?

STUDENT. It itself by itself⁴¹ is being taught astronomy.

[*To the other students.*]

Go inside, so that *he* won't happen upon us.

195

STREP. Not yet, not yet! Let them stay, so

I can share a little matter of mine with them.

STUDENT. But it's not possible for them to spend very much time outside in the air.

[*Other students exit into the thinkery.*]

STREP. [*catching sight of the instructional equipment.*]

Before the gods, what are these things? Tell me.

200

STUDENT. This is astronomy.

STREP. And what is this?

STUDENT. Geometry.

STREP. So what's the use of it?

STUDENT. To measure the earth.

STREP. For the land-allotment?

STUDENT. No, all of it.

STREP. That's a pretty trick

you speak of: for it's populist and useful.⁴²

205

STUDENT. Here's a map of the whole earth. See?

Here's Athens.

³⁹The Spartans captured by the Athenians in their victory at Pylos in 425 were kept at Athens for four years; they must have been pale and emaciated from the long siege and from their captivity (Thucydides IV.29–41, V.24). Apparently Socrates' students practice an almost inhuman asceticism.

⁴⁰In Greek poetry, Erebus and Tartarus are names for the underworld, or for different aspects of it.

⁴¹"It itself by itself" is an expression that Socrates uses frequently in Plato's dialogues (e.g. *Phaedo* 64c).

⁴²Athens sometimes distributed titles to the land of its conquered enemies to a number of citizens selected by lot. Strepsiades thinks they are using geometry to divide up the earth in a huge *clerarchy* or land-allotment. "Trick" is *sophisma*, from *sophon*, "wise."

STREP. What are you saying? I'm not persuaded,
since I don't see any judges sitting.⁴³

STUDENT. Truly, this *is* the area of Attica.

STREP. And where are my fellow demesmen of Cicynna?

210

STUDENT. They're in here. And Euboea here, as you see,
is long and laid out quite far.

STREP. I know, for it was laid out by us and Pericles.⁴⁴
But Lacedaemon—where is it?

STUDENT. Where is it? Here.

STREP. So near us! Give thought to how
to take it quite far away from us.

215

STUDENT.

But that's impossible.

STREP. By Zeus, you'll lament, then!

[*Socrates comes into view aloft, suspended in a basket.*]

Come, who is this man in the basket?

STUDENT. Himself.

STREP. Who is "himself"?

STUDENT. Socrates.

STREP. [*Calling to him*]. Socrates!

[*To the student.*] Come, you shout to him loudly for me.

220

STUDENT. You call him yourself. I haven't the leisure. [*Exit.*]

STREP. Socrates! Socratesie!

SOCRATES. Why are you calling me, ephemeral one?

STREP. First, I beseech you, tell me what you're doing.

SOC. I tread on air and contemplate the sun.

225

STREP. Then you look down⁴⁵ on the gods from a perch
and not from the earth?—if that's what you're doing.

SOC. I would never

discover the matters aloft correctly
except by suspending mind and subtle thought
and mixing them with their like, the air.

230

If I considered the things above from below on the ground,
I would never discover them. For the earth forcefully

⁴³Strepsiades alludes to the litigiousness for which Athenians were notorious.

⁴⁴Euboea, a long narrow island off the coast of Attica, was ruthlessly subjugated by an Athenian force of which Pericles was a commander (Thucydides I.114). This expedition occurred over twenty years before the first performance of the *Clouds*, so Strepsiades' "us" refers to "the older generation."

⁴⁵In the previous line "contemplate" is literally "think around," i.e., "look at from all sides" (*periphronēin*), and may also mean "despise." Strepsiades explains Socrates' meaning by using a related word (*hyperphronēin*, repeated at 1400) that definitely means "despise" or "look down on" (literally, "over-think"). Strepsiades' comment indicates that he, like almost all men, regards the sun as a god (cf. *Apology* 26d).

pulls to itself the moisture from the thought.
The same thing happens also to water cress.⁴⁶

STREP. What are you saying? 235

Does thinking pull the moisture into the water cress?

Come now, Socratesie, come down to me.

And teach me what I've come for.

SOC. [*descends and gets out of the basket*].

Why did you come?

STREP. I wish to learn to be a speaker.

I am plundered, I am pillaged⁴⁷ by interest and 240

most peevish creditors; my property is being seized for debts.

SOC. How is it that you were unaware of yourself becoming indebted?

STREP. Horse-disease ground me down, devouring me terribly.

But teach me one of the two speeches,

the one that pays nothing back. Whatever fee 245

you set, I swear by the gods to pay you.⁴⁸

SOC. What gods indeed will you swear by! For first of all, we don't credit gods.⁴⁹

STREP. What do you swear with?

Iron coins, as in Byzantium?⁵⁰

SOC. Do you wish to know divine matters plainly, 250
to know correctly what they are?

STREP. Yes, by Zeus, if in fact it's possible.

SOC. And to associate in speech with the Clouds,
our daimons?

⁴⁶Water cress seeds were known to absorb moisture, just as (according to Socrates) the earth does. The opinion that moisture impedes thought was held by the philosopher Diogenes of Apollonia, who lived and wrote at the same time as Socrates (Diels-Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, A19, §44).

⁴⁷"Plunder and pillage," literally "lead and carry" (*agein kai pherein*), is an expression used of troops looting in wartime, *leading off* slaves and cattle and *carrying* property away.

⁴⁸It is noteworthy that Socrates shows no interest at all in Strepsiades' offer to pay but only seeks to disabuse him of his old-fashioned religious convictions. This, along with the fact that Socrates and his students live in dire poverty (175), shows that Strepsiades' uninformed opinion that Socrates teaches for pay (98)—an opinion with which many modern scholars agree—is incorrect. The gift that Strepsiades gives Socrates at line 1147 is spontaneous. See also n. 149.

⁴⁹Literally, "gods are not *nomisma* for us." Socrates appears to be using the word *nomisma* in its root meaning, "something believed in," but Strepsiades indicates in his confused response that he understands *nomisma* in its usual sense of "money." Socrates was accused of not "believing in" the gods of the city (*Apology* 24b–c); the word "believe in" is *nomizein*, related to *nomisma*. (Alan H. Sommerstein, ed., Aristophanes, *Clouds* [Warminster: Aris & Phillips 1982], p. 173.)

⁵⁰Unlike other Greek cities at this time, which used precious metals, Byzantium minted its coins from iron.

STREP. Very much so.

SOC. [*leading him to a low bench*].

Then sit down on the sacred couch.

STREP. There, I'm seated.

SOC. [*placing a wreath on his head*].

Now, take this crown.

255

STREP. Why a crown? Oh me, Socrates,
don't sacrifice me like Athamas!⁵¹

SOC. No, we do all these things to the initiates.

STREP. What will I gain, then?

SOC. You will become a smooth, rattling, fine-as-flour speaker.

260

But hold still.

[*Sprinkles flour on him from a can by the bench.*]

STREP. By Zeus, you're not going to be false with me,
for I will become fine as flour when I'm sprinkled!

SOC. The old man must hush and listen to the prayer.

[*Solemnly.*] O master and lord, measureless Air, who holds the
earth aloft,

and bright Aether, and august goddesses Clouds sending thunder
and lightning,

265

arise, appear, O Ladies, aloft for the thinker.

STREP. [*covering his head with his cloak*].

Not yet, not yet, until I fold this around me, so I won't be
drenched.

O miserably unhappy me, to come from home without even a cap!

SOC. Come then, much-honored Clouds, to display yourselves
to this man,

whether you are seated on the sacred snow-beaten peaks of
Olympus,

270

or setting up a sacred chorus with the nymphs in the gardens of
father Oceanus,⁵²

or drawing waters in golden vessels at the mouths of the Nile,
or keeping to Lake Maeotis or the snowy look-out of Mimas⁵³—
hear, receive the sacrifice, and rejoice in the sacred rites.

⁵¹In the *Athamas*, a lost tragedy of Sophocles, Athamas, crowned with a wreath, was about to be sacrificed on an altar when he was rescued by Heracles. Strepsiades may also have been reminded of Athamas because of the name of Athamas' wife: Nephele ("Cloud"). This section (254–262) is a parody of the initiation rites into the Mysteries at Athens (n. 32).

⁵²In Hesiod (*Theogony* 133) Oceanus is the child of Earth and Heaven (but not father of the Clouds). His gardens were supposed to be in the sea far to the west of Greece.

⁵³Lake Maeotis is the present-day Sea of Azov in the northeast corner of the Black Sea. Mimas juts out from the coast of Asia Minor just north of the island of Chios. The four lines that state the possible locations of the Clouds describe the four points of the compass: north (Olympus), west (Oceanus' gardens), south (the Nile), and east (Maeotis and Mimas).

CHORUS [<i>song, offstage</i>].	
Ever-flowing Clouds,	[<i>Strophe</i> . ⁵⁴] 275
let us arise, clearly apparent in our dewy, shining nature, from deep-resounding father Oceanus up to lofty mountain peaks shaggy with trees, so that	280
we may gaze upon look-out points apparent from afar, and sacred land with well-watered fruits, and roarings of rivers most divine, and deep-thundering, roaring sea.	
For the untiring eye of Aether blazes with glistering rays.	285
But let us shake off the rainy cloud from our immortal form, and let us give the earth to our far-seeing eye.	290
SOC. O greatly august Clouds, it is apparent that you heard me calling you.	
[<i>To Strepsiad</i> es.] Did you perceive a voice and bellowing thunder, divinely august?	
STREP. Yes, and I revere you, much honored ones, and wish to fart in response to the thunder, so much do I tremble and fear before them. And if it is sanctioned—right now, in fact, even if it isn't sanc- tioned—I want to take a crap.	295
SOC. Do not mock, and don't do what those trygic daimons ⁵⁵ do, but hush. For a great swarm of goddesses is in motion with songs.	
CHORUS [<i>song, still at a distance</i>].	
Rain-bearing virgins,	[<i>Antistrophe</i> .]
let us go to the sleek land of Pallas, to see the well-manned earth	300
of Cecrops, ⁵⁶ much beloved, where there is reverence for sacred things unspeakable;	

⁵⁴"Strophe" is the name given to a song sung by the Chorus, to which an "antistrophe" answers (line 298). The names strophe ("turning") and antistrophe ("turning back") are thought to refer to the practice of having the Chorus dance in one direction during the strophe and in the reverse during the antistrophe (not here, however, for the Chorus is still offstage).

⁵⁵"Trygedy" (mocking "tragedy") is a comic term for comedy, from *trygē*, "grape vintage," alluding to Dionysus, god of wine and of drama (line 519). The word translated "trygic daimon" is *trygodaimon*, coined by Aristophanes in imitation of *kakodaimon*, "miserably unhappy," but perhaps also suggesting the comic poets' claim to be daimons (gods).

⁵⁶"Well-manned" (*euandron*) means either "having good men" or "abounding in men." Cecrops is the legendary first king of Athens.

where the halls that receive the Mysteries
are displayed in holy initiation-rites.⁵⁷

Gifts to heavenly gods are there, 305
lofty-roofed temples and statues,
most sacred processions for the blessed ones,
and well-crowned sacrifices
and festivals for gods
in all manner of seasons. 310

And as spring comes on, there is Bromian⁵⁸ rejoicing,
and contentions of well-sounding choruses,
and deep-thundering music of flutes.

STREP. Before Zeus, I beseech you, tell me, Socrates, who are
these
who have uttered this august thing? They aren't anything like
heroines,⁵⁹ are they? 315

SOC. Not in the least: they're heavenly Clouds, great goddesses
for idle men,

who provide us with notions and dialectic and mind,
and marvel-telling and circumlocution and striking and seizing.⁶⁰

STREP. That's why, on hearing their utterance, my soul is taking
flight,
and it already seeks to speak subtly and to quibble about smoke, 320
to oppose a speech with another speech by pricking a notion with a
sharper notion.

So if it's somehow possible, I desire to see them now clearly
apparent.

SOC. Look over here toward Parnes.⁶¹ For I already see them
quietly descending.

[*The Chorus of Clouds begins to enter from the side entrance.*]

STREP. Where? Show me.

SOC. Quite many are coming
through the hollows and the thickets—there, at the side.

STREP. [*peering*]. What's the matter? 325
I don't see them.

⁵⁷The Chorus refers to the Eleusinian Mysteries celebrated at Athens and famous throughout Greece. See *Apology* n. 80 on Triptolemus.

⁵⁸"Bromius" is Dionysus. These last three lines of the song refer to the comic and tragic poetry contests held in the spring at Athens in honor of Dionysus.

⁵⁹The terms "hero" and "heroine" were popularly applied to the outstanding protagonists in the Trojan and Theban wars described in poetry. As descendants of gods, they were held in great respect. Cf. *Apology* n. 48.

⁶⁰These four terms are technical jargon from current rhetorical theory. The precise meaning of "striking" and "seizing" is unknown.

⁶¹Parnes: a mountain in Attica.

SOC. By the entrance!

STREP. Now I do, but just barely.

[*The Chorus of twenty-four Clouds is now fully on stage.*]

SOC. By now you must see them, unless your eyes are oozing pumpkins.

STREP. By Zeus, I do. O much-honored ones! They're already covering the whole place.

SOC. But did you neither know nor believe that they are goddesses?

STREP. No, by Zeus. I held them to be mist and dew and smoke. 330

SOC. Then you don't know, by Zeus, that they nourish most of the sophists,

Thurian diviners,⁶² practicers of the art of medicine, idle-long-haired-onyx-ring-wearers.⁶³

Song-modulators of circling choruses—men who are impostors about the things aloft—

idle do-nothings they nourish too, because they make poetry and music about these Clouds.⁶⁴

STREP. This is why poets have composed "twisting-radiant burning impetus of wet clouds," 335

and "tresses of hundred-headed Typhus"⁶⁵ and "hard-blowing tempests";

and then, "air-swimming, crooked-clawed birds of the liquid aire," and "rains of waters from dewy clouds." And then, in return for making these phrases, they gulp down

slices of great good fish and birds' flesh of thrushes.

SOC. That's why, of course. And isn't it just?

STREP. Tell me, what's happened to them 340
(if in fact they truly are clouds), that they are like mortal women? For those in the sky are not such as these.

SOC. Well, what sorts of things are those?

STREP. I don't plainly know. Anyway, they're like spread-out wool,
not women, by Zeus, not at all. These have noses.

⁶²The founding of the Greek colony of Thurii in southern Italy in 443 would have provided an occasion for divinations and prophecy, much of it no doubt fraudulent.

⁶³This word (*sphragidonychagokomētai*), coined by the poet, means "foppish, sophisticated intellectuals and aesthetes."

⁶⁴This and the preceding line refer to poets of dithyrambs, a form of lyric poetry sung by choruses at public contests.

⁶⁵Typhus, son of Earth, was buried beneath the earth and generated storm winds (Hesiod, *Theogony* 820–880). His "tresses" must be clouds. Strepsiades is recalling snatches of dithyrambic poetry that speak metaphorically of clouds.

SOC.

Now answer whatever I ask.

STREP.

Say quickly what you wish.

345

SOC. While looking upward have you ever seen a cloud like a centaur

or leopard or wolf or bull?

STREP.

By Zeus, I have. What about it?

SOC. They become all things that they wish. And so if they see a long-hair,

one of those shaggy "rustics," like the son of Xenophantus, they mock his madness and make themselves look like centaurs.⁶⁶

350

STREP. What if they catch sight of Simon,⁶⁷ a plunderer of public property: what do they do?

SOC. They make his nature apparent by suddenly becoming wolves.

STREP. That's it, then—that's why yesterday, when they saw Cleonymus, who abandoned his shield in battle, they became deer because of seeing this great coward.⁶⁸SOC. [*gesturing to the Chorus*]. Yes, and now, you see, they've become women because they saw Cleisthenes.⁶⁹

355

STREP. Then hail, Ladies! And now, if you ever do so for anyone else,

for me too let your voice burst forth the length of heaven, O queens of all!

CHORUS [*the leading Cloud speaks for the Chorus*].

Hail, elderly man born long ago, hunter of Muse-loving speeches. And you, priest of subtlest babble, tell us what you want.

For we wouldn't listen to anyone else of those who are now sophists-of-the-things-aloft

360

except for Prodicus: to him because of his wisdom and judgment, to you

because you swagger in the streets and cast your eyes from side to side,

⁶⁶"Rustics" is slang for homosexuals. The son of Xenophantus may be Hieronymus, a foppish dithyrambic poet of no particular merit. Centaurs were mythical creatures—half-man, half-beast, shaggy and rustic in appearance—that indulged their heterosexual and homosexual appetites shamelessly.

⁶⁷Simon is otherwise unknown, except that he was also a perjurer (line 399).

⁶⁸Cleonymus, apparently cowardly and poor (line 675), was frequently ridiculed by Aristophanes. The deer is proverbially timid.

⁶⁹Cleisthenes, a notorious homosexual, was effeminate in appearance, apparently being unable to grow a beard. He appears as a character in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* 574–654 and is ridiculed in several other plays.

and barefooted you endure many evils and put on a solemn face
for us.

STREP. O Earth, what a voice! How sacred and august and
portentous!

SOC. Yes, for they alone are goddesses; everything else is drivel. 365

STREP. Come now, by the Earth, isn't Olympian Zeus a god for
us?

SOC. What Zeus! Don't babble. Zeus doesn't even exist.

STREP. What are you saying?

Who makes it rain? First of all make this apparent to me.

SOC. [*indicating the Clouds*].

They do, of course. I'll teach it to you by great signs.

Come, where have you ever beheld it raining without clouds? 370

Yet Zeus should be able to make it rain in the clear air by himself,
while they are away.

STREP. By Apollo, you've certainly clinched *that* by your present
argument.

Yet before, I supposed that in truth Zeus was pissing through a
sieve.

But tell me who it is that thunders—which makes me tremble.

SOC. *They* thunder, as they roll.

STREP. In what way, you all-daring man? 375

SOC. When they are filled up with much water and are
compelled⁷⁰

to be borne along by necessity, hanging down full of rain, then
they heavily fall into each other, bursting and clapping.

STREP. And who is it that compels them to be borne along? Isn't it
Zeus?

SOC. Not in the least. It's ethereal vortex.

STREP. Vortex? I hadn't noticed that 380

Zeus doesn't exist, and that instead of him Vortex is now king.⁷¹
But you haven't yet taught me anything about the clapping and the
thunder.

SOC. Didn't you hear me say that the clouds full of water
fall into each other and clap because of their density?

STREP. Come, how am I to trust this?

⁷⁰The word "compel" (here and 379) is literally "necessitate." Socrates' explanation of rain (and thunder: 405) in terms of necessity indicates his deterministic view of the nature of the Clouds.

⁷¹Strepsiades is thinking of the dethroning of Ouranos by Kronos, and of Kronos by Zeus (see *Euthyphro* 6a). He thinks that Zeus (*Dios* in the genitive) has been overthrown by Vortex or Whirl (*Dinos*).

- SOC. I will teach you from yourself. 385
 Have you ever been filled up with stew at the Panathenaea,⁷² and
 then your belly was stirred up,
 and suddenly an agitation rumbled through it?
 STREP. Yes, by Apollo, right away it acts terribly and it's been
 stirred up in me;
 the stew claps just like thunder and clamors terribly:
 softly at first, "pappax, pappax," and then it leads to
 "papapappax," 390
 and when I crap, it absolutely thunders, "papapappax," just like
them.
 SOC. Then consider, since you have farted so much from such a
 little belly,
 [*gesturing toward the sky*] isn't it likely that this air, being boundless,
 should thunder greatly?
 STREP. So that's also why the names "thunder" and "fart" are
 similar to each other.⁷³
 But teach me where the thunderbolt, bright with fire, comes from, 395
 which burns us to ashes when it strikes, and scorches the living.
 For it is apparent indeed that Zeus hurls it at perjurers.
 SOC. You fool, smelling of the age of Kronos,⁷⁴ you're out of
 date.
 If in fact he strikes perjurers, then how is it that he didn't burn up
 Simon
 or Cleonymus or Theorus?⁷⁵ Yet they are vehement perjurers. 400
 But he strikes his own temple and Sunium, the cape of Athens,
 and tall oak trees. Why? An oak, at least, doesn't perjure itself.
 STREP. I don't know. But you appear to speak well. Then what is
 the thunderbolt?
 SOC. Whenever a dry wind is raised aloft and gets shut up into
 these clouds,

⁷²The Panathenaic festival was held annually in honor of Athena, the patron goddess of Athens. A procession to the acropolis (see line 69), sacrifices (that is, a feast), and games were held. See *Euthyphro* n. 24.

⁷³"Thunder" is *brontē*, "fart" is *porḗ*. *Brontē* may have been pronounced *borntē*; otherwise the wordplay is forced, which may be the point. Dover and most manuscripts assign line 394 to Socrates (K. J. Dover, ed., Aristophanes, *Clouds* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968]); we follow the other manuscripts and Leonard Woodbury, "Strepsiades' Understanding: Five Notes on the *Clouds*," *Phoenix* 34 (1980), 112.

⁷⁴Kronos, who ruled the gods before Zeus (n. 71), was a byword for "old fashioned." The belief that Zeus punishes perjurers (those who violate their solemn oaths in court) was an old tradition.

⁷⁵Simon and Cleonymus were mentioned at lines 351 and 353. Theorus is represented in Aristophanes' *Wasps* (42–45, 418–419) as a flatterer.

it puffs them up inside like a bladder; then by necessity
it bursts them and goes rapidly outside because of its density,
and by its rushing and impetus it itself kindles itself. 405

STREP. Yes, by Zeus! At any rate, this is just what happened to
me once at the Diasia.⁷⁶

I was roasting a thick sausage for my kinfolk, and I carelessly failed
to slit it;

it got puffed up and, suddenly breaking open, 410
it spattered my eyes with crap and burned my face.

CHORUS [*addressing Strepsiades*].

O human being, desiring great wisdom from us,
how happy you will become among Athenians and the Greeks!—
if you have a good memory, and are a thinker, and have hard labor
in your soul, and aren't wearied either by standing or walking, 415
and aren't too much annoyed when you shiver with cold, and have
no desire to dine,

and keep away from wine and gymnastics and the other mindless
things,

and believe that it is best (which is likely for a shrewd man)
to win by being active and taking counsel and warring with your
tongue.

STREP. As for a solid soul and sleep-disturbing pondering, 420
and a thrifty, life-consuming belly that dines on bitter herbs,
have no care: as for these things, I would boldly offer to be forged
on an anvil.

SOC. Now won't you believe in no god but ours:
this Chaos, and the Clouds, and the Tongue, these three?⁷⁷

STREP. I simply wouldn't converse with the others even if I
should meet them, 425
nor would I sacrifice or pour libations or offer incense to them.

CHORUS. Now tell me boldly what we may do for you. For you
won't fail to get it

if you honor and admire us and seek to be shrewd.

STREP. O Ladies, I beg of you then this one very little thing:
to be the best speaker of the Greeks by a hundred stadia.⁷⁸ 430

CHORUS. This you will have from us, so that henceforth from
now on

⁷⁶The Diasia is a festival in honor of Zeus marked by family gatherings.

⁷⁷Chaos: the word means "space" or "sky." In Hesiod Chaos is that which first comes into being, before all gods (*Theogony* 116). Tongue: Socrates refers to speech or the ability to speak well. When he names the three gods, he probably points to the sky, the Chorus, and his own mouth.

⁷⁸Stadia: a "stadium" is about one-ninth of a mile.

no one will win more proposals in the Assembly of the people than you.

STREP. Don't speak to me of great proposals. For I have no desire for them,

but only to twist justice enough to give my creditors the slip.

CHORUS. Then you'll get what you yearn for, since you have no desire for great things.

435

Give yourself boldly to our ministers.

STREP. I'll do this, trusting in you. For necessity weighs me down because of the koppa-horses and the marriage that has crushed me.

So let them simply use me as they wish.

I offer them this body of mine

440

to be beaten, to hunger, to thirst,

to be squalid, to shiver with cold, to be flayed alive—

if only I am going to escape my debts

and be reputed by human beings to be

a bold, glib-tongued, daring go-getter,

445

a stinking concocter of falsehoods,

a phrase-finding lawsuit shyster,

a statute-book, a rattler, a fox, a sharpster,

supple, ironic, slippery, boastful,

a stinging, disgusting, twisting pest,

450

a cheater.

If those who meet me call me these things,

let them⁷⁹ simply do to me whatever they want.

And if they wish,

by Demeter, let them serve up a sausage

455

made out of me to the thinkers!

CHORUS.⁸⁰ This man has a mettle that is not without daring, but ready.

[*To Strepsiades.*] Know that

when you learn these things, from me

460

you will have glory among mortals

the length of heaven.

STREP. What will happen to me?

CHORUS. For all time you will lead with me a life most enviable of human beings.

465

STREP. But will I ever see this?

⁷⁹"Them" refers to Socrates and his fellows in the thinkery (as also in lines 439–440).

⁸⁰Most manuscripts assign lines 457–462, 464–465, and 467–475 to Socrates. We follow all modern editors in assigning them to the Chorus.

CHORUS. Yes, and consequently
 many will always be sitting
 at your gates
 wishing to consult 470
 and come to speak,
 taking counsel with you
 over affairs and indictments
 concerning many talents,⁸¹
 things worthy of your wit. 475

[*To Socrates.*]

But attempt first to teach the elderly man whatever you're going to,
 and set his mind in motion, and try out his judgment.

SOC. Come then, describe your own way⁸² to me,
 so that when I know what sort it is,
 I may next bring novel devices to bear on you. 480

STREP. What? Do you have it in mind, before the gods, to lay
 siege to me?

SOC. No, but I wish to ask you in brief
 whether you have a good memory.

STREP. Yes, in two ways, by Zeus!
 If something is owed me, I have quite a memory;
 but if, miserably, I owe, I'm quite forgetful. 485

SOC. Do you have it in your nature to be a speaker?

STREP. To be a speaker isn't in it, but to be a cheat is.

SOC. Then how will you be able to learn?

STREP. Beautifully, have no care.

SOC. Come now, so that whenever I throw out something wise
 about the things aloft, you'll snatch it up right away. 490

STREP. What, then? Am I going to feed on wisdom like a dog?

SOC. This human being is unlearned and barbaric.

I fear, elderly one, that you'll need blows.

Come, let me see, what do you do if someone beats you?

STREP. I let myself be beaten,
 and then, after holding on a little while,⁸³ I call the bystanders as
 witnesses; 495
 then, again after waiting a moment, I bring a lawsuit.

⁸¹A "talent" is a large measure of silver, worth 6,000 drachmae.

⁸²"Way" is *tropos*, meaning here "bent," "turn of mind," or "temperament" (same word in line 483). The point is that different pupils, having various natures, need different approaches.

⁸³To make a stronger case in court, Strepsiades lets himself suffer for a while.

SOC. [*ready to take Strepsiades indoors for instruction*].
Come now, take off your cloak.

STREP. Have I done some injustice?⁸⁴

SOC. No, but it's the custom to enter stripped.

STREP. But I'm not going in to search for stolen property.⁸⁵

SOC. Take it off. Why are you being silly?

STREP. [*taking off his cloak*]. Tell me this, now: 500

If I am diligent and learn eagerly,
which of the students will I resemble?

SOC. Your nature won't be any different from Chaerephon's.⁸⁶

STREP. Oh me, miserably unhappy, I'll become half dead!

SOC. Stop chattering. Follow me and 505
hurry over here, quickly. [*Leads him up to the door.*]

STREP. First put a honey-cake
into my hands, for I fear
going down inside, as if I were going into the cave of Trophonius.⁸⁷

SOC. Go on! Why do you keep poking about the door?
[*They enter the thinkery.*]

CHORUS. Go and farewell, 510
since you have this courage.

[*The door closes behind the two men.*]

May there be good fortune for this
human being, because, proceeding
into the depth of his age,
he colors his own nature with matters 515
fit for those younger than he
and toils at wisdom.

[*Parabasis. The leading Cloud comes forward and addresses the audience.*]⁸⁸

⁸⁴Strepsiades thinks he is being stripped to be given a beating. "Stripped" here means only "without one's cloak"; he is being asked to remove his jacket, so to speak.

⁸⁵Athenian citizens had the right to search the houses of others for stolen goods, provided that they wore no clothing in which they could smuggle the articles in so as to pretend to discover them there.

⁸⁶Chaerephon's "nature" was pale and gaunt.

⁸⁷The cave of Trophonius, located between Thebes and Delphi, was visited by those who wished to obtain oracles from the dead hero Trophonius. It was believed that the snakes that infested the cave could be appeased with honey-cakes.

⁸⁸The interlude that follows (to line 626) while Socrates is instructing Strepsiades indoors is called the *parabasis* ("digression"), in which the Chorus speaks directly to the audience. (Almost all of Aristophanes' comedies feature a parabasis.) Its first part (518–562) is delivered by the leading Cloud, through whom Aristophanes speaks in his own name and in the first person. This identification of Aristophanes with the Chorus in the *Clouds* is unique among his plays.

Spectators, to you I will freely speak out
the truth, by Dionysus who nurtured me.
As I would win⁸⁹ and be believed wise, 520
so also, since I hold you to be shrewd spectators
and this to be the wisest of my comedies,
I deemed it worthy that you first should taste afresh the one that
provided me
the most work. At that time I retreated, worsted by vulgar men,
although I didn't deserve it.⁹⁰ For this, then, I blame you, 525
the wise, for whose sake I busied myself over it.
But I will never voluntarily betray the shrewd among you.
From the time when my Moderate Man and my Pederast
were spoken of as best here by men whom it is pleasant even to
speak of,⁹¹
—that was when I was still a virgin and wasn't yet permitted to
have children; 530
I exposed it, but some other girl got it and took it up,
while you nobly nurtured and educated it⁹²—
from that time you have been keeping for me sworn pledges of
your judgment.
So now, in the manner of Electra, this comedy
has come seeking, if she is fortunate enough to find spectators so
wise: 535
she will recognize, if she sees it, the lock of her brother.⁹³
So consider how moderate she is by nature: first,
she has not come with a hanging leather phallus stitched on,
thick and red at the top, to make little boys laugh;
nor does she mock the bald-headed, nor dance the cordax; 540

⁸⁹"Win": i.e., win the contest against the other two competing comedies. The three comedies presented at a festival were ranked by a panel of judges in order of merit.

⁹⁰Aristophanes is rebuking his audience for the bad reception it gave to the *Clouds* at its first performance (it placed third, i.e., last). Apparently he rewrote this first part of the parabasis (518–562) some time after the first presentation of the play (see nn. 96, 109).

⁹¹Aristophanes refers to the characters of the *Banqueters*, his first comedy, which is no longer extant.

⁹²Aristophanes means that he was too young to produce plays ("children") in his own name, so, like a girl with an illegitimate baby, he willingly concealed his authorship (left it to die in an exposed place). Another "girl" (an older playwright) found it and the family "she" brought it to (the Athenian audience) has since fostered it.

⁹³In Aeschylus' *Choephorae* Electra longs for a sign of her lost brother Orestes. His return is heralded by a lock of his hair, which Electra discovers on the tomb of their father Agamemnon. Just as Electra hopes that Orestes will return and kill their mother, who had killed Agamemnon, so Aristophanes hopes that the wise spectators who approved the *Banqueters* will return to him and redeem the earlier defeat of the *Clouds* by granting the first prize to this second production. (The word "comedy" in Greek is feminine in gender.)

nor does the elderly man while speaking his words
 beat whoever is present with his staff to hide poor jokes;
 nor does she dart in holding torches or shout "Oh! Oh!"—
 no, she has come trusting only in herself and her words.⁹⁴
 And I, a man who is such a poet, am no long-hair,⁹⁵
 nor do I seek to deceive you by leading in the same things two and
 three times:

545

I always sophisticate by bringing in novel forms
 not at all like one another—and all shrewd.

When Cleon⁹⁶ was greatest, I am the one who hit him in the belly
 and did not dare to jump on him again when he was down.

550

But they,⁹⁷ now that Hyperbolus⁹⁸ has given them a grip,
 are always trampling on him, the wretch, and his mother.

Eupolis,⁹⁹ the very first, dragged in his *Maricas*;

being bad, he badly turned our *Knights* inside out,

adding to it only a drunken hag for the sake of the cordax.

555

(Phrynichus¹⁰⁰ put her in a poem long before, for the sea-monster
 to eat.)

Then Hermippus in turn wrote a poem against Hyperbolus,
 and now all the others are bashing away against Hyperbolus,
 imitating my images of the eels.¹⁰¹

So whoever laughs at these, let him not delight in mine.

560

But if you enjoy me and these discoveries of mine,
 in times to come you will be reputed to think well.

⁹⁴In fact, of course, Aristophanes employs in the *Clouds* many of the low devices mentioned here, although less so than in his other comedies. The "cordax" is an undignified, perhaps licentious dance used in comedy.

⁹⁵"Long-hair": see n. 63. The line has a second meaning if, as seems probable from ancient evidence, Aristophanes was bald.

⁹⁶Cleon was a crude but powerful demagogue, the leading figure in Athenian politics for a time after Pericles' death (Thucydides III.36–40, IV.21–22). He was "greatest" after the capture of the Spartans at Pylos (n. 39), when Aristophanes attacked him strongly in his *Knights*. His preeminence in Athens ended when he was killed in battle in 422 (Thucydides V.1–10), about a year after the first performance of the *Clouds*.

⁹⁷"They" are Aristophanes' rival comic poets.

⁹⁸Hyperbolus was a demagogue, prominent in Athens after Cleon, and even more vulgar than his predecessor. The line means, "once Hyperbolus opened himself to criticism by his deplorable actions, my rivals started attacking him without restraint."

⁹⁹Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes were the three leading comic poets of the age (Horace, *Satires* I.4.1).

¹⁰⁰Phrynichus, another rival poet (somewhat older than Aristophanes, like Hermippus, next line) wrote a comedy which apparently parodied the legend of Andromeda, a beautiful girl threatened by a sea-monster.

¹⁰¹In his *Knights* (864) Aristophanes compared Cleon to eel-catchers, who stir up mud in order to increase their catch.

[*Ode, sung by the Chorus.*]

Lofty guardian, great	[<i>Strophe.</i>]	
Zeus, tyrant ¹⁰² of gods,		
I first call upon to join the Chorus;		565
and the great-strengthened director of the trident,		
wild heaver of		
earth and salty sea; ¹⁰³		
and our great-named father,		
Aether most revered, life-nurturer of all;		570
and the steerer of horses, ¹⁰⁴ who		
covers with rays exceedingly bright		
the plain of earth, a daimon great		
among gods and mortals.		
[<i>Epirrhema.</i> ¹⁰⁵ <i>The leading Cloud again speaks to the audience.</i>]		
O most wise spectators, apply your minds,		575
for we have been done injustice and blame you to your faces.		
For although we of all gods benefit the city most,		
to us alone of daimons you do not sacrifice or pour libations—		
we who watch over you. If there is ever some mindless		
expedition, then we thunder or drizzle. ¹⁰⁶		580
Further, when you were about to choose as general the enemy of		
gods,		
the Paphlagonian tanner, ¹⁰⁷ we drew our eyebrows together		
and sent forth terrible things; thunder burst through lightning;		
the moon was abandoning her courses; and the sun		
quickly drew his wick back into himself, ¹⁰⁸		585
declaring that he would not appear for you if Cleon were to be		
general.		
Nevertheless, you chose him. They say that bad counsel		
belongs to this city, but that the gods,		
whenever you go wrong, turn it to the better.		

¹⁰²The term "tyrant" is not always as strongly disparaging as it sounds in English, although it certainly conveys the notion of illegitimacy or usurpation. (Consider what Zeus did to his father: *Euthyphro* 5e–6a and note).

¹⁰³Poseidon.

¹⁰⁴Helios, the sun, was represented as a charioteer guiding his horses across the sky.

¹⁰⁵This section of the parabasis is called the *epirrhema*, "afterword" (575–594). The leading Cloud now speaks on behalf of the Clouds as goddesses.

¹⁰⁶The Clouds claim that they warn the Athenians against foolish military campaigns in their war with Sparta. The Greeks took rain as an inauspicious sign.

¹⁰⁷The "Paphlagonian tanner" is Cleon, who was the son of a tanner and was presented in the *Nights* as a slave from Paphlagonia, a barbaric region of Asia Minor.

¹⁰⁸I.e., the stormy weather obscured the moon and sun.

And that this¹⁰⁹ too will be profitable, we will easily teach you. 590
 If you convict the vulture Cleon of taking bribes and of stealing,
 and then muzzle his neck in the stocks,
 you will again find, as in the old days, that even if you did go
 wrong somewhat,
 the affair will turn out to the better for the city.
 [Antode, sung by the Chorus.]¹¹⁰
 Further, come to me, lord Phoebus, [Antistrophe.] 595
 Delian one, holding the lofty-horned
 Cynthian rock;¹¹¹
 and you, blessed one, who hold the all-golden
 house of Ephesus, wherein Lydian maids
 greatly revere you;¹¹² 600
 and our local goddess,
 aegis-driving Athena, protector of the city;
 and you who hold the rock Parnassus
 and blaze with pine-torches,
 conspicuous among the Delphic Bacchants, 605
 reveler Dionysus.¹¹³
 [Antepirrhema. Spoken by the leading Cloud.]
 When we were preparing to start on our way here,
 the Moon happened to meet us and enjoined us
 first to greet the Athenians and their allies.
 Next she declared she was angry and had suffered terrible things, 610
 although she has benefited all of you, not in words, but
 manifestly.
 First, thanks to her, you save no less than a drachma each month
 for torches,
 so that everyone, as he is going out in the evening, says,
 "Don't buy a torch, boy, the moon's light is beautiful."

¹⁰⁹"This" is the election of Cleon as general. The fact that Cleon is spoken of here as alive indicates that the epirrhema remains as it stood in the play's original version (see n. 90). Scholars therefore doubt whether Aristophanes ever completed his revision and whether the play was ever performed a second time at a major festival.

¹¹⁰This *antode* ("song answering an ode") continues the ode of 563–574, as the *antepirrhema* that follows it continues the epirrhema.

¹¹¹"Phoebus" is Apollo; Delos is the island sacred to him, on which was found a rocky height called Cynthus.

¹¹²The reference is to Artemis, whose worship centered at Ephesus, a Greek city on the coast of Asia Minor. Artemis of Ephesus was highly regarded in Lydia, a non-Greek inland country to the east of Ephesus.

¹¹³Parnassus is the mountain facing Delphi, site of the oracle of Apollo. For three months of the year this region was given over to Dionysus and to the revels of his female worshippers, the Bacchants.

She says she does other good things for you, and yet you do not
 keep the days 615
 at all correctly;¹¹⁴ you wreak confusion up and down,
 so that the gods, she says, threaten her each time
 they are cheated of their dinner and go home
 without getting the feast appropriate to a reckoning of the days.
 So whenever you should be sacrificing, you are inflicting
 tortures¹¹⁵ and contesting lawsuits; 620
 and often when we gods are keeping a fast,
 lamenting Memnon or Sarpedon,¹¹⁶
 you are pouring libations and laughing. In return for this, Hyper-
 bolus, chosen by lot
 this year to be the Sacred Recorder, was
 stripped of his crown by us gods.¹¹⁷ Thus he will know better 625
 that he ought to keep the days of his life according to the moon.
 [*The Chorus now retires from center stage. In the choral interlude an
 indefinite length of time has passed, during which Strepsiades has been
 receiving instruction indoors. Socrates now enters from the thinkery.*]
 SOC. By Respiration, by the Chaos, by the Air!¹¹⁸
 Nowhere have I seen a man so rustic,
 so resourceless, so dull, so forgetful
 that he has forgotten the petty little quibbles he was learning 630
 before he learned them! Nevertheless I'll
 call him outdoors here to the light.
 [*Calling into the thinkery.*]
 Where's Strepsiades? Come out and bring your bed.
 STREP. [*emerging with a flea-infested mattress and blanket*].
 But the bugs won't let me carry it out.
 SOC. Hurry up, put it down and apply your mind.
 STREP. [*sets down the bed and edges away from it*]. There! 635

¹¹⁴The Greek calendar year was shorter than the solar year by about eleven days. Hence the time of year when a given month might fall varied considerably, since every few years an extra month had to be inserted into the calendar to restore the months to their proper seasons. So the festivals, at which sacrifices were presented to the gods, never took place at exactly the same seasonal time from one year to the next.

¹¹⁵The Athenians permitted the torture of slaves in the gathering of evidence for trials.

¹¹⁶Memnon, the son of Dawn, and Sarpedon, the son of Zeus, were killed at Troy (Pindar, *Pythian Ode* VI.28–42; Homer, *Iliad* XVI.463–526).

¹¹⁷A "Sacred Recorder" was sent from various Greek cities to the Amphictionic council, which oversaw the management of the Delphic oracle and other sacred matters. How Hyperbolus lost his badge of office, the wreath, is unclear. He may have been removed from office; or perhaps the *Clouds* mean that the wind literally blew the wreath off.

¹¹⁸Socrates swears here by three "gods" all of whom seem to be equivalent to air.

SOC. Come now, what do you first wish to learn now of the things that you've never been taught at all? Tell me: about meters, or about words, or rhythms?

STREP. Meters¹¹⁹ for me. For lately
I was swindled of two quarts by a barley-meal huckster. 640

SOC. I'm not asking you that, but which you believe is the most beautiful meter, the trimeter or the tetrameter?¹²⁰

STREP. To me, nothing is preferable to a half-sixth.¹²¹

SOC. You're speaking nonsense, fellow.¹²²

STREP. Now make me a bet
that a tetrameter is not a half-sixth. 645

SOC.

To the crows! How rustic you are and poor at learning!
Perhaps you would be able to learn about rhythms.

STREP. But how will rhythms benefit me in getting my barley?

SOC. First, they will make you elegant in company,
an expert in what sort of rhythm is 650

"enoplion," and again, what sort is "dactylic."¹²³

STREP. "Dactylic?" By Zeus, I know that.

SOC. Then tell me.

STREP. [*holding up his index finger*].
What else but this finger?
[*He extends his middle finger in a vulgar gesture.*]

Before, when I was still a boy, like so.

SOC. You're crude and a dullard.

STREP. No, you dreary man, I'm not, 655
for I have no desire to learn any of these things.

SOC. What, then?

STREP. This! This! The most unjust speech!

SOC. But you must learn other things before that:
what quadrupeds are correctly called males.

STREP. I do know the males, if I'm not mad: 660
ram, goat, bull, dog, chicken.

¹¹⁹"Meters" is also the word for "measures."

¹²⁰These are poetic meters; Strepsiades thinks (or pretends to think) measures of quantity are meant.

¹²¹A "half-sixth" is equivalent to four quarts, the measure on which Strepsiades' next remark is based (the word tetrameter means "four-measure").

¹²²"Fellow": see *Apology* n. 49.

¹²³Enoplion ("warlike") is a stirring martial rhythm which some believe to be: - / - - / - - / - . Such a rhythm is sometimes employed, for example, in Sousa's marches. Dactylic ("finger"): each measure of this rhythm consists of a long and two shorts (- - -). For an account of these rhythms, see Dover, p. 180.

SOC. Do you see what's happened to you? You call the female "chicken," in the same way as you do the male.

STREP. Come now, how so?

SOC. How? "Chicken" and "chicken."

STREP. Yes, by Poseidon! Then what should I call them now? 665

SOC. "Chickeness," and the other, "rooster."¹²⁴

STREP. "Chickeness?" Well done, by the Air!

In return for this teaching alone,

I'll fill up your kneading-pan with a circle of barley meal.

SOC. See, again, there's another one. You call "pan" 670
male when it's female.¹²⁵

STREP. In what way?

Am I calling "pan" male?

SOC. Certainly.

just as if you were to say "Cleonymos."

STREP. How so? Tell me.

SOC. For you, "pan" (*kardopos*) amounts to the same as
"Cleonymos."

STREP. But, my good man, Cleonymos didn't even have a knead-
ing pan. 675

He kneaded his dough in a little round bowl.¹²⁶

But what should I call it from now on?

SOC. What?

"Panette" (*kardopē*), just as you say Sostratē.¹²⁷

STREP. "Panette," as female?

SOC. Yes, you're speaking correctly.

STREP. And that would be: "panette," "Cleonymē."¹²⁸ 680

SOC. But furthermore, you must learn about names:

which of them are male, and which are female.

STREP. But I, at least, know the ones that are female.

SOC. Then tell me.

STREP. Lysilla, Philinna, Cleitagora, Demetria.

¹²⁴The Greek word for chicken, *alektryon*, had a male variant in general use, *alektor*, here translated "rooster." But Socrates has to coin a word for female chicken, *alektryaina*, "chickeness."

¹²⁵Some Greek nouns, such as "kneading pan" (*kardopos*), are feminine in gender but have a masculine ending in *-os*. The usual feminine ending for such nouns would be *-ē*.

¹²⁶Strepsiades may understand the Greek of Socrates' previous sentence to say: "The same thing: for you, a kneading pan can belong to Cleonymos." Strepsiades is perhaps thereby reminded of Cleonymos' poverty (he cannot afford a kneading pan); the joke is unclear.

¹²⁷*Sostratē*: a common name for a woman.

¹²⁸Strepsiades gives Cleonymos' name a feminine ending, probably alleging some effeminacy in him.

SOC. And what sorts of names are male?

STREP.

Ten thousand:

685

Philoxenus, Milesias, Amynias.¹²⁹

SOC. But, villain, these aren't male.

STREP. Aren't they male in our view?

SOC.

In no way, for

how would you call Amynias if you met him?

STREP. How? Like this: "Come here, come here, Amynia,"¹³⁰

690

SOC. You see? You're calling Amynias a woman.

STREP. Isn't it just, since she isn't serving in the army?

But why am I learning things that we all know?

SOC. For nothing, by Zeus!

[*Leading Strepsiades over to his bed, he pulls back the flea-bitten blanket and gestures to him to get in.*]

But lie down here—

STREP.

To do what?

SOC. —and think out one of your own troubles.

695

STREP. Oh no, I supplicate you, not there! But if I *must* lie down, let me think out these very things on the ground.

SOC. There's no other way but this.

STREP. [*reluctantly gets into the bed and covers himself up*].

Miserably unhappy me!

Such a penalty I will pay to the bugs today!

SOC. [*song*].

Think and examine:

700

concentrate yourself in every way

and spin yourself around.

Swiftly, whenever you fall into

perplexity, jump to another

thought of wit and keep sweet-spirited sleep

705

away from your eyes.

STREP. [*he has been tossing and squirming under the bedclothes, and now lies silently for a moment, but suddenly cries out in pain*].


Attatai! Attatai!

SOC. What are you suffering? What ails you?

STREP. [*under the covers*].

¹²⁹These three Athenians were probably known to be effeminate or homosexual. Philoxenus and Amynias are mentioned in the *Wasps*, Philoxenus as a passive homosexual, Amynias as a wealthy gambler who fell into poverty (74, 84, 1266). Amynias was one of Strepsiades' creditors (*Clouds* 31).

¹³⁰Greek has a *vocative* case, used to address someone directly. The vocative of Amynias happens to end in *-a*, a typical feminine ending.

Wretched me, I'm perishing! From my couch
 the Corinthians¹³¹ are creeping out and biting me, 710
 and devouring my sides,
 and drinking out my soul,
 and pulling out my balls, 
 and digging through my anus,
 and destroying me! 715

SOC. Now don't grieve too heavily.

STREP. [*still under the covers*].

How can I not, when
 gone is my money, gone my complexion,
 gone my soul, gone my shoe,
 and further, besides these evils, 720
 as I sing while I'm on watch,¹³²
 I am almost gone!

[*Pause. Strepsiades settles down. Socrates waits for a moment, then speaks.*]

SOC. You there! What are you doing? Aren't you thinking?

STREP. [*sticking his head out*]. Me?

Yes, by Poseidon!

SOC. And what did you think of, then?

STREP. Whether anything will be left of me by the bugs! 725

SOC. You will perish most evilly!

STREP. But, my good man, I have already just perished!

SOC. You must not be soft, but cover yourself up;
 for you must discover an intellection abstractional¹³³
 and fraudulent. [*Covers him up again with the sheepskin blanket.*]
 STREP. Oh me! If only someone would throw on me,
 instead of sheepskins, an abstracting notion! 730
 [*Pause.*]

SOC. Come now, first I'll observe what he's doing.
 [*To Strepsiades.*]

You there! Are you sleeping?

STREP. [*under the covers*]. No, by Apollo, not I!

SOC. Have you got hold of anything?

¹³¹Corinth was fighting on the side of Sparta, and its army regularly ravaged Athenian territory. There is a pun on *kores*, bugs. This passage parodies Heracles' death throes in Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 1052–1057.

¹³²"To sing while on watch" may be an idiomatic expression meaning "to pass the time in difficult or tedious circumstances."

¹³³"An intellection abstractional": with a second meaning, "a cheating insight." Dover assigns this speech, which in the manuscripts is Socrates', to the Chorus.

STREP. No, by Zeus, I certainly don't!
 SOC. Nothing at all?

STREP. [*poking out his head*].

Nothing but the dick in my right hand.

SOC. Won't you quickly cover yourself up and think of something?

735

STREP. What about? You tell me this, Socrates.

SOC. You yourself first discover and say what you wish.

STREP. You've heard ten thousand times what I wish:
 about the interest, how I can pay nobody back.

SOC. Go now, cover up, let your subtle thought loose;
 think about your troubles in small parts,
 distinguishing and considering them correctly.

740

STREP. [*Under the blanket again, he is again beset by the bugs.*]

Oh wretched me!

SOC. Keep still! And if you're perplexed over any of your
 intellections,

leave it, go away, then set your judgment back
 in motion again and weigh it up.

745

[*Another long pause. Suddenly Strepsiades leaps out of bed.*]

STREP. O dearest Socratesie!

SOC. What, old man?

STREP. I have a notion abstractional of the interest!

SOC. Display it.

STREP. Now tell me—

SOC. What?

STREP. What if I should buy a Thessalian witch
 and draw down the moon by night,¹³⁴ then

750

close it up in a round feather-box
 like a mirror,¹³⁵ and then keep watch over it?

SOC. How would this benefit you?

STREP. Because
 if the moon would no longer rise anywhere,
 I wouldn't have to pay back the interest.

SOC. Why?

755

STREP. Because money is lent out by the month.

SOC. Well done! But again, I'll throw out another shrewd thing
 for you.

¹³⁴A Greek tradition had it that witches of Thessaly could perform this feat (*Gorgias* 513a).

¹³⁵Perhaps Strepsiades thinks of the moon as a mirror because he has learned that the moon's light is a reflection of sunlight, as the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles taught (*Diels-Kranz, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, B42, 43).

If someone should indict you in a five-talent lawsuit,
tell me how you would make it disappear.¹³⁶

STREP. How? How? I don't know. But it must be sought. 760

SOC. Don't always coop up your judgment around yourself,
but slack your thought away into the air,
like a beetle thread-tied by the foot.

STREP. [*after a pause*].

I've discovered a most wise way of making the lawsuit disappear:
you'll agree with me yourself.

SOC. What sort of thing is it? 765

STREP. Have you ever seen that stone at the drug-dealers',
the beautiful one, transparent,
from which they kindle fire?

SOC. Are you speaking of a glass lens?

STREP. I am. Come, what if I were to take it,
while the scribe was writing down the indictment, 770
and were to stand farther off, like this, toward the sun,
and melt away the letters of my lawsuit?¹³⁷

SOC. Wisely done, by the Graces!¹³⁸

STREP. Oh me, how pleased I am
that my five-talent lawsuit has been written off!

SOC. Come, quickly snatch up this one.

STREP. What? 775

SOC. If you were a defendant and were about to lose
because you had no witnesses present, how would you twist away
from the lawsuit?

STREP. Most simply and easily.

SOC. Then tell me.

STREP. I am telling you.

What if, while one lawsuit was still pending
before mine was called, I would run away and hang myself? 780

SOC. You're talking nonsense.

STREP. I'm not, by the gods, since
no one will bring a lawsuit against me if I'm dead.

SOC. You're talking foolishness. Go away. I won't teach you any
more.

STREP. Why? Do teach me, before the gods, Socrates!

¹³⁶To "make a lawsuit disappear" is a legal expression for *quashing* it. Strepsiades applies the expression literally.

¹³⁷The suit would have been entered on a wax tablet.

¹³⁸Dwelling with the Muses, the Graces were goddesses of song and dance (Hesiod, *Theogony* 64). Swearing by the Graces was not common.

SOC. But you forget right away whatever you learn. 785
What were you taught first just now? Tell me.

STREP. Come, let me see, what *was* first? What was first?
What was it in which we knead our barley-meal?
Oh me, what was it?

SOC. Won't you go to the crows and get lost,
you most forgetful and dull oldster? 790

STREP. Oh me! What ever will happen to me, a miserable wretch?
For I'll perish if I haven't learned tongue-twisting.

[*He turns to the Clouds.*]

O Clouds, give me some useful counsel.

CHORUS [*the leading Cloud speaking*].
We counsel you, elderly man,
if you have a grown-up son, 795
to send him to learn instead of yourself.

STREP. I do have a son, noble and good.
But since he's not willing to learn, what should I do?

CHORUS. Do you give in to him?

STREP. Yes, for he's brawny-bodied and robust,
and he's born of women who are high-flying and aristocratic.¹³⁹ 800
But I'll go after him, and if he's not willing,
there's no way I won't drive him out of the house!
[*To Socrates.*]

Go in and wait for me a little while.

[*Exit Strepsiades into his house.*]

CHORUS [*song, addressed to Socrates*].
Do you perceive that you'll soon
have very many good things because of us 805
alone of the gods? For he's ready
to do everything you bid him to.
And you—recognizing that the man is
astounded and manifestly excited—
quickly lap up 810
as much as you can.

For somehow such things are wont
to turn in another direction.

[*Exit Socrates into the thinkery. Commotion inside Strepsiades' house.*
Enter Strepsiades, driving Pheidippides before him.]

¹³⁹"Aristocratic": literally "Coisyrras," plural of Coisyra: see n. 10.

STREP. By the Mist, you won't stay here any longer!
Go and eat the pillars of Megacles!¹⁴⁰ 815

PHEID. Daimonic man, what's the matter with you, father?
Your mind isn't well,¹⁴¹ by Olympian Zeus.

STREP. See! See! "Olympian Zeus"! What foolishness!
Believing in Zeus at your age!

PHEID. Really! Why do you laugh at that?

STREP. I was pondering 820
that you're a little child and think ancient things.

[*Motions to Pheidippides to come closer.*]

Nevertheless, come here so you'll know more,
and I'll tell you a certain matter, and when you learn it, you'll be a
man.

But don't teach it to anyone!

PHEID. [*comes up next to him*].

There. What is it?

STREP. You swore just now by Zeus. 825

PHEID. I did.

STREP. Do you see, then, how good it is to learn?
There is no Zeus, Pheidippides.

PHEID. Who, then?

STREP. Vortex is king, having driven out Zeus.

PHEID. Ugh! What are you babbling?

STREP. Know that this is so!

PHEID. Who says this?

STREP. Socrates the Melian,¹⁴² 830
and Chaerephon, who knows the footsteps of fleas.

PHEID. Have you come into such great madness
that you're persuaded by bilious men?¹⁴³

STREP. Hold your tongue
and do not disparage men who are shrewd
and intelligent: because of their thrift, 835
none of them has ever had his hair cut or oiled himself
or gone to a bath-house to wash. But *you*
are washing up my life as if I were dead.¹⁴⁴
Now go as quickly as possible and learn in my place.

¹⁴⁰I.e., go and beg for sustenance in the marble halls of your wealthy uncle Megacles.

¹⁴¹"Your mind isn't well": literally, "you don't think well."

¹⁴²Diagoras of Melos was a notoriously atheistic philosopher or poet. Hence Socrates is a "Melian."

¹⁴³In Greek medicine madness was sometimes attributed to an excess of bile.

¹⁴⁴I.e., you are squandering my livelihood as if I no longer needed it.

- PHEID. What could someone learn from them that is of any use? 840
 STREP. Truly? Whatever is wise among human beings.
 And you will know yourself—how unlearned and dense you are.
 But wait here for me a little while.
 [*Suddenly rushes back into the house.*]
 PHEID. Oh me! What'll I do, my father's out of his wits!
 Shall I take him to court and get him convicted of being out of his
 mind, 845
 or shall I announce his madness to the coffin-makers?¹⁴⁵
 [*Strepsiades hurries out of the house, leading a slave holding a rooster and a hen.*]
 STREP. Come, let me see. What do you believe this is? Tell me.
 [*Points to the rooster.*]
 PHEID. A chicken.
 STREP. Beautiful! And what is this? [*Pointing to the hen.*]
 PHEID. A chicken.
 STREP. Both the same? You're ridiculous.
 Not so, from now on. Call this one 850
 "chickeness" and that one "rooster." [*Exit slave.*]
 PHEID. "Chickeness"? Are these the shrewd things you learned
 when you went inside just now to the earth-born?¹⁴⁶
 STREP. Yes, and many other things. But whatever I'd learn on
 each occasion
 I forgot right away because of the multitude of my years. 855
 PHEID. Is *that* why you also lost your cloak?
 STREP. I didn't lose it, I thought it away.
 PHEID. And what did you do with your shoes, you mindless
 man?
 STREP. Like Pericles, I lost them for something needful.¹⁴⁷
 [*He leads his son over to the thinkery; Pheidippides follows reluctantly.*]
 But come, walk, let's go. After you obey 860
 your father, do wrong if you like. I know that I too
 once obeyed you, a lisping six-year-old.
 With the first obol I got for jury-duty,
 I bought you a little wagon at the Diasia.¹⁴⁸
 PHEID. Verily, in time you will be indignant about these things. 865

¹⁴⁵I.e., perhaps he is about to die.

¹⁴⁶The expression may mean only "stupid clods," but strictly speaking the "earth-born" are the Giants who once stormed Olympus to overthrow the gods (Sommerstein, p. 202).

¹⁴⁷Pericles secretly bribed the Spartan king in 445 to withdraw his army from Attica. He later rendered account of the public money to Athens with the famous phrase, "spent for something needful." (Plutarch, *Pericles* 22–23.)

¹⁴⁸Diasia: see n. 76.

STREP. It's well that you've obeyed.
[Knocks on the thinkery door.] Come here, come here, Socrates,
 come out! I'm bringing you this son of mine,
 I've persuaded him against his will.
[Socrates comes out.]

SOC. Yes, he's still a childling
 and isn't used to the baskets here.

PHEID. *[with casually incorrect enunciation].*
 You'd be properly used yourself if you were hung in a basket! 870

STREP. To the crows! Are you rude to your teacher?

SOC. See there, "basket." How foolishly he uttered it,
 and with his lips loosely apart!
 How would he ever learn acquittal of a lawsuit
 or summons or persuasive puffery? 875
 And yet Hyperbolus learned this for a talent.¹⁴⁹

STREP. Have no care, teach him. He's wise-spirited by nature.
 Even when he was a little boy—only so big—
 he'd fashion houses and carve ships indoors
 and produce little leather wagons 880
 and make frogs out of pomegranate peel—how does that seem to
 you?

He's to learn those two speeches:
 the stronger, whatever it may be, and the weaker,
 which argues the unjust things and overturns the stronger.
 If not both, he's to learn at least the unjust one by every art. 885

SOC. He'll learn them himself from the two speeches themselves;
 I will leave.

STREP. Now remember this: he's to be able
 to speak against all the just things.
*[Socrates goes into the thinkery. Enter from the same door Just Speech,
 perhaps dressed in simple, old-fashioned clothing that is a little
 threadbare.]*

JUST SPEECH¹⁵⁰ *[calling into the open door].*
 Come out here! Show yourself
 to the spectators: you're so bold. 890
[Unjust Speech follows, perhaps foppishly and fashionably attired.]

¹⁴⁹I.e., if even the stupid Hyperbolus (n. 98) could learn forensic rhetoric (to be sure, with the help of an extremely large fee), there is hope for Pheidippides. Some editors take this line as proof that Socrates taught rhetoric for pay, but Socrates does not say that he himself taught Hyperbolus.

¹⁵⁰Just Speech and Unjust Speech, personifications of two ways of speaking and ways of life, are called Stronger Speech and Weaker Speech in Dover's edition, contrary to the manuscripts.

UNJUST SPEECH. Go wherever you want. For I'll
 destroy you much more by speaking among the many.
 JUST. You'll destroy me? Who are you?
 UNJUST. A speech.
 JUST. Yes, a weaker one.
 UNJUST. But I'll defeat you who claim to be stronger than I.
 JUST. By doing what wise thing? 895
 UNJUST. By discovering novel notions.
 JUST. Yes, these things are flourishing
 because of these mindless ones here. [*Points to the audience.*]
 UNJUST. No, they're wise.
 JUST. I'll destroy you badly.
 UNJUST. Tell me, by doing what?
 JUST. By speaking the just things. 900
 UNJUST. I'll overturn them by speaking against them,
 for I quite deny that Justice¹⁵¹ even exists.
 JUST. You deny that it exists?
 UNJUST. Yes, for come, where is it?
 JUST. With the gods.
 UNJUST. If Justice exists, then why didn't Zeus
 perish when he bound his father?¹⁵² 905
 JUST. Ugh! This is the evil
 that's spreading around. Give me a basin.¹⁵³
 UNJUST. You're an old fogey and out of tune.
 JUST. You're a pederast and shameless!
 UNJUST. You've spoken roses of me.
 JUST. You're ribald! 910
 UNJUST. You crown me with lilies.
 JUST. And a parricide!
 UNJUST. You don't recognize that you're sprinkling me with gold.
 JUST. Before, this wasn't gold, but lead.
 UNJUST. But as it is now, this is adornment for me.
 JUST. You're too bold.
 UNJUST. And *you* are ancient. 915
 JUST. Because of you, none of the lads
 is willing to go to school.
 And someday the Athenians will recognize
 what sorts of things you teach the mindless.

¹⁵¹Justice here is *Dikē*, the goddess or idea. In Hesiod, *Works and Days* 256–262, she sits beside her father Zeus and tells him of men's injustices.

¹⁵²See *Euthyphro* 6a and note for the story.

¹⁵³A basin: to vomit in.

- UNJUST. You're shamefully squalid.¹⁵⁴
- JUST. And *you* are faring well, 920
although before, you were a beggar
claiming to be Telephus the Mysian,
gnawing on the notions of Pandeletus
from your little pouch.¹⁵⁵
- UNJUST. Oh, the wisdom that you've remembered! 925
- JUST. Oh, the madness—yours and that of the city
which nourishes you
who harm the lads.
- UNJUST [*pointing to Pheidippides*].
You won't teach *him*, you Kronos!
- JUST. Yes I will, at least if he should be saved 930
and not just practice chattering.
- UNJUST [*to Pheidippides*].
Come here, and let him rave.
- JUST. You'll weep if you lay a hand on him!
[*With Just Speech and Unjust Speech about to come to blows, the leading
Cloud steps forward.*]
- CHORUS. Stop your battling and raillery! But display,
[*to Just Speech*]
you, what you used to teach them in the past, 935
[*to Unjust Speech*]
and you, the novel education, so that he,
[*indicating Pheidippides*]
when he's heard you both speaking against each other,
may decide and go to school.
- JUST. I'm willing to do this.
- UNJUST. I too am willing.
- CHORUS. Come, then, which one will speak first? 940
- UNJUST. I'll let him.
- And then, from whatever things he says,
I'll shoot him down with
novel phraselets and thoughts.¹⁵⁶
And in the end, if he keeps on muttering, 945

¹⁵⁴I.e., Just Speech is so far out of favor in Athens that he has been reduced to the condition of a beggar.

¹⁵⁵Telephus, the king of Mysia (north of Lydia in Asia Minor), appeared disguised as a beggar in Euripides' *Telephus*. (The play has not survived.) Just Speech means that in the past Unjust Speech lived beggar-like off meager scraps of food in a pouch, and that the "scraps" were legalistic and sophistic quibbles. Pandeletus may have been a contemporary politician and informer.

¹⁵⁶The image is of a bow shooting arrows supplied by the words of his opponent.

he'll be destroyed by my notions
as if he were stung on his whole face
and on both eyes by hornets!

CHORUS [*song*].

Now let the two, trusting [*Strophe.*]
in their very shrewd 950

speeches and thoughts and
notion-coining ponderings,
show which of them will be
manifestly better as they speak.

For now the whole hazard 955
of wisdom is being risked here,
and about it there is a very great contest
among my friends.

[*The leading Cloud addresses Just Speech.*]

But you who crowned the elders with many upright habits,
utter forth your voice however you delight, and tell us your own
nature. 960

JUST. I will speak then of the ancient education as it was
established
when I was flourishing, speaking the just things, and when mod-
eration was believed in.

First, it was needful that no one hear a boy muttering a sound;
next, that those from the same neighborhood walk on the streets
here in good order

to the cithara teacher's, lightly clad, in a group, even if the snow
came down like barley-meal. 965

Next, again, he used to teach them to learn a song by heart (stand-
ing with their thighs apart),¹⁵⁷

"Pallas, Terrible Sacker of Cities" or "A Far-Reaching Shout,"¹⁵⁸
pitched to the harmony that their fathers handed down.

If anyone was ribald or added any modulation
of the sort they use nowadays 970

(those difficult modulations of Phrynis),¹⁵⁹

he would be thrashed and beaten with many blows, as one who
would efface the Muses.

It was needful for the boys to keep their thighs covered while
sitting at the gymnastic trainer's,

¹⁵⁷Holding the thighs together was apparently regarded as an unseemly or girlish posture.

¹⁵⁸These are probably the first words of ancient Athenian patriotic and warlike songs.

¹⁵⁹Phrynis was a musician whose musical innovations were already introduced before Aristophanes was born.

so as to show nothing cruel to those outside.¹⁶⁰
Next, again, when they stood up, they had to smooth the sand
back again and be mindful 975
not to leave behind an image of puberty for their lovers.
At that time no boy would anoint himself below the navel,
so that dew and down bloomed on their private parts as on fruit.
Nor would he make up a soft voice and go to his lover,
he himself pandering himself with his eyes. 980
Nor was it allowed him at dinner to help himself to the radishes,
nor to snatch dill or parsley from his elders,
nor to eat relishes, nor to giggle, nor to cross his legs.
UNJUST. Yes, ancient and Dipolia-like and full of grasshoppers
and of Cecides and of the Buphonia!¹⁶¹
JUST. Yes, but these are the things 985
from which my education nurtured the men who fought at
Marathon.¹⁶²
But *you* teach them now to bundle themselves up in their cloaks
right away,¹⁶³
so that I'm ready to choke whenever someone at the Panathenaea
who ought to be dancing
holds his shield in front of his haunch, having no care for
Tritogeneia.¹⁶⁴
[*To Pheidippides.*] In view of these things, lad, be bold and choose
me, the stronger speech, 990
and you'll have knowledge of how to hate the marketplace and
keep away from the baths;
and to be ashamed at shameful things and to be inflamed if anyone
mocks you;

¹⁶⁰I.e., the sight of a boy's nakedness is a torment to his older male lovers, with whom Just Speech expresses a certain sympathy by using the word "cruel."

¹⁶¹The Dipolia was a festival honoring Zeus Polieus ("City-Guardian"), probably full of old-fashioned ritual. "Grasshoppers" was the name given to golden brooches used by Athenian men of the Marathon period to fasten up their long hair (Thucydides I.6.3). Cecides was an early dithyrambic poet. The Buphonia ("ox-slaying") was probably a part of the festival Dipolia.

¹⁶²Marathon, twenty-six miles from Athens, was the site of the famous battle at which the Athenians defeated the invading Persian army (490 B.C.). This victory was traditionally regarded as the peak of ancient Athenian valor.

¹⁶³I.e., they are unable to endure cold even for a moment.

¹⁶⁴"At the Panathenaic festival young men danced the famous Pyrrhic war dance, naked and armed only with helmet and shield. But the youth who had always been 'coddled' in cloaks found his shield more useful to keep his abdomen warm than to brandish in warrior-fashion. [It also required a strong arm to hold the shield out from the body during the vigorous dance.] This was neglectful of the honor of Athena the war-goddess, Tritogeneia." Quoted from Lewis L. Forman's edition of the *Clouds* (New York: American Book, 1915), p. 179.

and to stand up from your seat for your elders when they approach,
 and not to misbehave toward your own parents; and not to do anything shameful that would tarnish the statue of Awe;¹⁶⁵ 995
 and not to dart into a dancing girl's house, lest you be broken off from your good fame
 by being hit with a fruit by a whore¹⁶⁶ while gaping at the things there;
 and not to talk back to your father at all, and not maliciously to remind him,
 by calling him "Iapetus,"¹⁶⁷ of the age when he nourished you as a nestling.
 UNJUST. If you obey him in these things, lad, by Dionysus, 1000
 You'll be like the sons of Hippocrates and they'll call you "honey-mama"!¹⁶⁸
 JUST. Yes, but you'll pass your time in the gymnasium, sleek and flourishing,
 not mouthing prickly perversities in the marketplace as they do nowadays,
 and you won't be dragged into court over a greedy, contradicting, shystering, petty affair.
 Rather, you'll go down to the Academy¹⁶⁹ and run under the sacred olive trees 1005
 with a moderate youth of your own age; you'll be crowned with a wreath of white reed,
 smelling of yew and of leisure and of the white poplar shedding its leaves,
 and in the season of spring you'll delight whenever the plane tree whispers to the elm.
 If you do these things that I tell you
 and pay mind to them, 1010
 you will always have
 a sleek chest, bright complexion,
 large shoulders, slender tongue,

¹⁶⁵I.e., do not disgrace the goddess Awe (*Aidōs*), mentioned in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 200, and probably frequently represented as a statue.

¹⁶⁶It is thought that girls sometimes indicated their willingness to be seduced by tossing a man a piece of fruit.

¹⁶⁷Iapetus, the brother of Kronos, is another name for "old fogy."

¹⁶⁸The sons of Hippocrates were apparently regarded as simpletons. The expression "honey-mama" alludes to a child's begging for sweets.

¹⁶⁹The Academy was a public park and gymnasium located outside the city walls, later famous as the location of Plato's school.

large buttocks, small penis.
 But if you pursue what they do nowadays, 1015
 first you will have
 a pale complexion, small shoulders,
 narrow chest, big tongue,
 small buttocks, big haunch, long decree.
 [*Pointing to Unjust Speech.*]
 And he will persuade you to believe everything shameful 1020
 is noble, and the noble is shameful.
 And besides this, he will fill you up
 with the pederasty of Antimachus!¹⁷⁰
 CHORUS [*song by the Clouds*].
 [*To Just Speech.*]
 O you who toil at nobly towering [Antistrophe.¹⁷¹]
 wisdom most glorious, 1025
 what a pleasantly moderate bloom
 is upon your speeches!
 They were happy who lived
 back then with former men.
 [*To Unjust Speech.*]
 In view of these things, you who possess 1030
 a conspicuously elegant Muse,
 you must say something novel,
 since that man is so well-reputed.
 [*The leading Cloud addresses Unjust Speech.*]
 You are likely to need terrific counsels against him
 if you are going to overthrow the man and not bring laughter onto
 yourself. 1035
 UNJUST. In fact I have long been choking in my innards, and I've
 been desiring
 to confound all these things of his with opposing notions.
 For I've been called the weaker speech among the thinkers here
 because of this very thing: that I was the first to have it in mind
 to speak things opposed to these laws and to justice. 1040
 And it is worth more than ten thousand staters¹⁷²
 to choose the weaker speeches and then to win.
 [*To Pheidippides.*]
 But consider how I'll refute the education he trusts in.

¹⁷⁰Antimachus: apparently a well-known homosexual; his name literally means "Against Battle" (i.e., "Pacifist").

¹⁷¹Antistrophe: corresponding to the strophe preceding Just Speech's oration.

¹⁷²A stater is a coin of substantial value.

He says, first, that he won't let you wash in warm water.

[*To Just Speech.*]

Yet by means of what notion do you blame warm baths? 1045

JUST. That they are most evil and make a man cowardly.

UNJUST. Hold on! I've got you by the waist right away, with no escape.

Tell me this too. Which of the children of Zeus do you believe is best

in soul, tell me, and has performed the most labors?

JUST. I judge no man to be better than Heracles. 1050

UNJUST. Where indeed have you ever seen *cold* baths of Heracles?¹⁷³

And yet who was more courageous?

JUST. These things, these are what make the bath-house full of youngsters chattering all day, but the wrestling schools empty!

UNJUST. Next, you blame spending time in the marketplace, but I praise it. 1055

If it was villainous, Homer would never have made Nestor an orator,¹⁷⁴ and all his wise men.

[*To Pheidippides.*]

From here I go back to the tongue, which *he* says the young should not practice, while *I* say they should.

Again, he also says they should be moderate. These are two of the greatest evils. 1060

[*To Just Speech.*]

For whom have you ever seen anything good happen to because of being moderate? Speak up, and refute me by telling whom.

JUST. There are many. Peleus, at any rate, got his sword because of this.¹⁷⁵

UNJUST. A sword? A pretty gain the miserably unhappy man got!

¹⁷³Heracles was traditionally "a benefactor of mankind, a slayer of monsters, and the ideal of male courage, strength, and endurance" (Dover, p. 224). Natural hot springs were called "baths of Heracles." They were held to have been given to him as a gift from the gods.

¹⁷⁴"Orator" is *agorētēs*, a word closely related to *agora*, which can mean not only "marketplace" but also "assembly." Nestor, a venerable old man, is called *agorētēs* in *Iliad* I.248 and IV.293.

¹⁷⁵Peleus once was a guest of Acastus. When Peleus repelled the advances of Acastus' wife, she accused him of trying to seduce her. Acastus thereupon contrived that Peleus would be left defenseless in a wilderness of wild beasts. But the god Hephaestus brought Peleus a sword, enabling him to escape the danger.

¹⁷⁶Hyperbolus, the demagogue mentioned at line 551, was originally in the business of manufacturing or selling lamps.

Hyperbolus of the lamp-market¹⁷⁶ got very many talents 1065
because of villainy—but no, by Zeus, no sword!

JUST. Yes, and Peleus also married Thetis because of his moderation.¹⁷⁷

UNJUST. Yes, and then she went off and abandoned him, for he wasn't hubristic or pleasant to spend all night with in the bedclothes. A woman delights in being treated wantonly. But *you* are a big Kronos. 1070

[*To Pheidippides.*]

For consider, lad, all that moderation involves, and how many pleasures you're going to be deprived of: boys, women, cottabus,¹⁷⁸ relishes, drinking, boisterous laughter. Yet what is living worth to you if you're deprived of these things? Well, then. From here I go on to the necessities of nature. 1075
You've done wrong, fallen in love, committed some adultery, and then you've been caught.

You're ruined, for you're unable to speak. But if you consort with me, then use your nature, leap, laugh, believe that nothing is shameful! For if you happen to be caught as an adulterer, you'll reply to him¹⁷⁹

that you've done him no injustice. Then you'll refer him to Zeus, 1080
how "even he was worsted by love and women;
yet how could you, a mortal, be greater than a god?"

JUST [*to Unjust Speech*].

But what if he has a radish stuck up his rear end and has his hair plucked out with hot ash because he obeys you?¹⁸⁰

By what argument will he be able to say that he's not bugged?¹⁸¹

UNJUST. And if he's bugged, what evil will he suffer? 1085

JUST. What evil could he ever suffer still greater than this?

¹⁷⁷The sea goddess Thetis was given by the gods as a wife to Peleus because of his virtues, according to Pindar, *Isthmian Ode* VIII. Peleus is particularly praised there for his reverence, but moderation is also mentioned (lines 27, 40). Their son was Achilles. There are several traditions about why Thetis deserted him, none having to do with sexual disappointment.

¹⁷⁸Cottabus was a popular game at Athenian banquets, requiring each person to toss the last drops of wine in his cup into a central basin without spilling any.

¹⁷⁹Him: i.e., the husband. The following three lines allude to the frequent stories in Greek poetry of Zeus's affairs with mortal and immortal women.

¹⁸⁰Such punishments were sometimes visited upon adulterers caught in the act.

¹⁸¹"Bugged" (*euryprōktos*: literally, "wide-anus") is literally descriptive of the punishment here described, but the term was commonly applied to passive homosexuals, who habitually submitted to buggery. Just Speech's point is that Pheidippides will be infamous if he follows Unjust's advice. Unjust refutes this in the lines following by showing him that all the famous men, in fact almost all Athenians, are infamous: "infamy" is perfectly compatible with a good reputation.

UNJUST. What will you say if you're defeated by me on this point?

JUST. I'll be silent. What else could I say?

UNJUST. Come now, tell me,

from what group come the public advocates?

JUST. From the buggered.

UNJUST. I'm persuaded.

1090

What then? From what group come the tragedians?

JUST. From the buggered.

UNJUST. You speak well.

But from what group come the popular orators?

JUST. From the buggered.

UNJUST. Then surely

you recognize that you're speaking nonsense?

1095

And among the spectators, consider which are the greater number.

JUST [*peering at the audience*].

I am considering.

UNJUST. What do you see, then?

JUST. Many more, by the gods, who are buggered!

[*Pointing to particular men in the audience.*]

Him, at any rate, I know, and that one,

and him, with the long hair.

1100

UNJUST. Then what will you say?

JUST. We've been worsted!

[*Flinging his cloak into the audience, he addresses the spectators.*]

You debauchees!

Before the gods, receive my cloak,¹⁸² since

I'm deserting to you!

[*He runs back into the thinkery, followed by Unjust Speech. Socrates comes out and addresses Strepsiades.*]

SOC.¹⁸³ What now? Do you wish to take your son here
and lead him away, or shall I teach him to speak for you?

1105

STREP. Teach and punish him and remember to
sharpen him up well for me: on the one side,
sharpen his jaw for petty lawsuits,
and on the other, for the greater matters.

1110

SOC. Have no care, you'll take him back as a shrewd sophist.

PHEID. No, but pale, I think, and miserably unhappy.

SOC. Let's go now.

¹⁸²A soldier intending to desert to the enemy would discard his cloak, which may have served as a uniform or as identification.

¹⁸³Contrary to the manuscripts, Dover assigns lines 1105-6 and 1111 to Unjust Speech, and lines 1113-14 to the Chorus.

PHEID. I think that
you'll regret these things.
[Socrates retires into the thinkery with Pheidippides for his further instruction; Strepsiades goes into his house. The Chorus comes forward for its second parabasis, delivered to the audience by the leading Cloud.]
What the judges¹⁸⁴ will gain if they justly grant this Chorus
a certain benefit, we wish to tell. 1115
First, if you wish to plow your fields in season,
we will rain for you first, for the others later.
Next, we will guard the vines when they are bearing fruit,
so that neither drought nor too much rain will weigh them down. 1120
But if someone who is mortal dishonors us who are goddesses,
let him apply his mind to the sorts of evils he will suffer from us.
He will get neither wine nor anything else from his land,
for whenever his olives and grapes are budding,
they will be knocked off. With such slings we will strike. 1125
If we see him making bricks, we will rain,¹⁸⁵ and
we will shatter the tile of his roof with round hailstones.
And if he himself or any of his kinsmen or friends ever get married,
we will rain all night,¹⁸⁶ so that he will perhaps wish
that he happened to be even in Egypt¹⁸⁷ rather than to judge
badly. 1130
[The Chorus now retires from center stage. In this interlude an indefinite length of time has passed, during which Pheidippides has been receiving instruction indoors. Strepsiades comes out of his house and approaches the thinkery to call for his newly educated son. He is carrying a gift of some sort for Socrates, perhaps a sack of meal.]
STREP. Fifth, fourth, third, after this the second,
then that day of all days which
I have dreaded and shuddered at and loathed the most:
right after this is the old and new.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴A panel of judges ranked the comedies performed at a given festival in the order of their merit. The *Clouds* are demanding the first prize.

¹⁸⁵Bricks were made by drying blocks of mud in the sun.

¹⁸⁶Much of the ceremony at Greek weddings was conducted outdoors, particularly the torchlight procession which accompanied the bride to her husband's house and the dancing that followed.

¹⁸⁷Although Egypt is remote and its customs outlandish ("the country of the most ancient antiquity and of excessive piety": Strauss, p. 35), at least it hardly ever rains there.

¹⁸⁸Strepsiades is counting off the last days of the month, the "twenties" (line 17), which were reckoned backwards. The penultimate day was the "second"; the last day was called the "old and new," and it was on this day that interest fell due. It was perhaps so called because during part of the day the moon was old and for the remaining part new.

For everyone whom I happen to owe says on oath 1135
that he will ruin and destroy me by putting down a deposit¹⁸⁹
against me.

While I am begging for due measure and just things
("You daimonic man, don't take this just now";
"Please postpone that"; "Let me off from the other"), they say
they will never get it back this way: they rail at me 1140
for being unjust, and they say they will bring lawsuits against me.
So now let them bring their lawsuits! Little do I care,
if Pheidippides has in fact learned to speak well.
But I'll soon know by knocking at the thinkery.
[*He knocks.*]

Boy, I say, boy! Boy!
SOC. [*opening the door*]. I greet Strepsiades. 1145
STREP. And I you. But take this first.

[*He hands him the gift, which Socrates sets down inside.*]
For one should show admiration in some way for the teacher.
And my son—tell me if he has learned that speech
which you introduced just now.

SOC. He has learned it.
STREP. Well done, O Fraud, queen of all! 1150

SOC. So you may be acquitted of any lawsuit you wish.

STREP. Even if witnesses were present when I took the loans?

SOC. So much the better, even if a thousand were present.

STREP. Then I will shout an overstrained shout!

Ho, weep, you moneylenders— 1155
you yourselves, and your principal, and interest on interest!¹⁹⁰
For you won't do me any more dirt.

Such a boy is nurtured for me
in these halls here,
brilliant with two-edged tongue, 1160
my bulwark, savior to our halls, to enemies a harm,
surceaser of a father's great evils!

[*To Socrates.*]

Run and call him
to me from within!

[*Socrates goes inside to fetch Pheidippides; Strepsiades calls after him.*]

¹⁸⁹A "deposit" was a sum of money paid to the city by the prosecutor on the first day of the new month to initiate a lawsuit; the deposit was forfeited if the suit was lost.

¹⁹⁰The words for "principal" (*archaia*) and "interest" (*tokoi*) may also mean "ancestors" and "offspring."

My child, my boy, come out of the house! 1165
Hear your father!¹⁹¹

[*Socrates and Pheidippides enter.*]

SOC. Here is the man.

STREP. [*embracing him*]. My dear, my dear!

SOC. Take him and depart. [*He returns into the thinkery.*]

STREP. Ho, ho, my child! Oh, oh! 1170

How pleased I am, first, to see your complexion!

Now you have, first, a negating and
contradicting look, and the local color

is simply blooming on you: the "what do you mean?"¹⁹² and the
reputation

for suffering injustice when (I know!) you are doing injustice and
working evil. 1175

And on your face is an Attic visage.

So save me, now that you have ruined me.

PHEID. What are you afraid of, then?

STREP. The old and new.

PHEID. Is "old and new" a certain day?

STREP. Yes, it's the one on which they say they'll put down their
deposits against me. 1180

PHEID. Then those who put them down will lose them again. For
there is no way that

one day could turn out to be two days.

STREP. It couldn't?

PHEID. How could it, unless, of course, the same woman
could turn out to be old and young at once?

STREP. And yet that is the law.

PHEID. That's because, I suppose, 1185
they don't know correctly what the law has in mind.

STREP. What does it have in mind?

PHEID. Solon¹⁹³ of long ago was a friend to the people in his
nature—

STREP. Surely that has nothing to do with the old and new.

¹⁹¹These two lines parody Euripides, *Hecuba* 171–173. Hecuba is calling to her daughter Polyxena so she can announce to her that the Greeks, who have conquered Troy, have decreed that Polyxena must die as a sacrifice to the dead Achilles.

¹⁹²"What do you mean?" (literally, "what are you saying?"): uttered contentiously, the question challenges and disputes anything said by anyone. The "local color" of the previous line probably refers to a pale complexion from time spent studying indoors.

¹⁹³Solon was a famous Athenian statesman of the late sixth century B.C. He reformed the constitution by abolishing serfdom, by dividing the citizenry into four classes based on wealth rather than descent, and by granting to the common people some political authority.

PHEID. —so he put the summons into two days,
into the old and into the new 1190
so that the deposits would occur at the new moon.

STREP. Then why did he add the old?

PHEID. So that the defendants, my dear man,
by being present one day beforehand,
might be voluntarily released. Or if not,
so that they might be distressed on the morning of the new
moon.¹⁹⁴ 1195

STREP. Then why don't the officials receive the deposits
at the new moon instead of on the old and new?¹⁹⁵

PHEID. The same thing happens to them, it seems to me, as to the
Foretasters:¹⁹⁶
they do their tasting one day earlier
so that the deposits may be filched as quickly as possible. 1200

STREP. [*to Pheidippides*].
Well done!

[*To the spectators*]

You wretchedly unhappy ones, why do you sit there
stupidly?

You are the booty of us wise men, since you are stones,
number, mere sheep, stacked-up jars.¹⁹⁷

Therefore I must sing an encomium to myself
and to my son here upon our good fortune. 1205

[*Sings.*]

"O blessed Strepsiades.

your own nature—how wise!

And such a son you are nurturing!"

That's what my friends and demesmen will say

in their envy when you win 1210

our lawsuits by your speaking!

But I will take you inside,

for I wish first to feast you.

¹⁹⁴Pheidippides is saying that the "old," the last day of the old month, must be different from the "new," the first day of the new month. By scheduling the summons one day before the suit could begin, Solon intended to encourage out-of-court settlements ("voluntarily released").

¹⁹⁵I.e., why do the officials take the deposits one day earlier than Solon's law intended?

¹⁹⁶Foretasters: public officials responsible for seeing to it that the food prepared for public festivals was satisfactory. Apparently they exercised their office on the day preceding the festival (Dover, p. 236).

¹⁹⁷The spectators, sitting in rows, one above another, must have looked like stacked jars from the stage.

[*Father and son retire into the house for their feast. While they are dining, one of Strepsiades' creditors approaches, a fat man, bringing a witness with him, with whom he is conversing.*]

CREDITOR.¹⁹⁸ What? Should a man give up any of his own belongings?

Never! It would have been better to blush at once
back then, than to have troubles now,
when for the sake of my own money
I am dragging you as a witness to my summons.¹⁹⁹ Besides, I'll
also become

an enemy to a man who is a fellow demesman.
But never will I shame my fatherland²⁰⁰
while I live.

[*In a loud voice.*] I summon Strepsiades—

STREP. [*opening the door and coming out*]. Who's there?

CRED. —to the old and new.

STREP. [*to the audience*]. I call to witness
that he said two days.

[*To the creditor.*]

What's the matter?

CRED. It's about the twelve minae you got when you bought the
dappled horse.

STREP. [*to the audience*].

A horse? Don't you hear? 1225

All of you know I hate horsemanship!

CRED. And by Zeus, you swore by the gods that you would give
it back.

STREP. No, by Zeus, for then my Pheidippides hadn't yet
gained knowledge of the unassailable speech.

CRED. Do you have in mind to deny it now because of this? 1230

STREP. Yes, for what else would I get out of his learning?

CRED. And will you be willing to deny it on an oath by the gods
wherever I bid you?²⁰¹

STREP. What gods indeed!

CRED. Zeus, Hermes, Poseidon.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸Some manuscripts identify this first creditor as Pasias (line 21).

¹⁹⁹In other words, "I should have suffered the shame of refusing him the loan in the first place, in order to spare myself the trouble I will now incur by bringing a lawsuit against a neighbor."

²⁰⁰He alludes to the Athenian addiction to litigation.

²⁰¹Oaths were felt to be more binding when sworn at an altar or sanctuary of the god in question.

²⁰²Probably Zeus as the chief god, Hermes as the god of commerce, and Poseidon as the god of horses.

STREP.

Yes, by Zeus,

and I'd even put down a three-obol piece besides, just to swear! 1235

CRED. May you perish someday, then, for your lack of awe!

STREP. [*to the audience*].This man would profit from being rubbed down with salt.²⁰³

CRED. Oh me! How you're ridiculing me!

STREP. [*pointing to the belly*].

There'll be room for six gallons.

CRED. By great Zeus and the gods,
you won't get away with this!STREP. [*laughing*]. I'm wondrously pleased by gods, 1240
and swearing by Zeus is laughable to those who know.

CRED. Verily, in time you will pay the penalty for this!

But before you send me away, answer me
whether you will give me back my money or not.STREP. Keep quiet now,
for I'll give you a plain answer immediately. 1245[*He goes into his house.*]CRED. [*to the witness*].What does it seem to you he'll do? Does it seem to you that he'll
give it back?[*Before the witness can reply, Strepsiades comes out of the house with a
kneading pan.*]STREP. Where's the one who's asking for his money?
Tell me, what is this?

CRED. What's this? a pan.

STREP. And then you ask for money, being such as you are?
I wouldn't give back even an obol to anyone 1250
who would call a panette a "pan."

CRED. So you won't give it back?

STREP. Not so far as I know.
So won't you hurry up and quickly pack yourself off
from my door?CRED. I'm going. And know this:
I'll put down a deposit, or may I live no longer! 1255[*Creditor and witness stalk toward the exit. Strepsiades calls after them.*]STREP. Then you'll throw that away too, in addition to the twelve
minae![*Pretending condolence.*]

²⁰³Strepsiades is saying that he could make a good wineskin out of the creditor's belly; hides in tanning were thoroughly rubbed with salt.

Yet I don't wish for you to suffer this
just because you foolishly called it "pan."
[Creditor and witness depart. Strepsiades goes back into the house with his
kneading pan. A second creditor enters limping.]

2ND CRED. Oh me! Me!

STREP. [coming out]. Ho!

Who ever is this who is lamenting? Surely it's not 1260
one of the daimons of Carcinus²⁰⁴ that gave utterance?

2ND CRED. What? Do you wish to know who I am?

A miserably unhappy man.

STREP. Then follow your path by yourself.

2ND CRED. O harsh daimon! O fortune, smashing the wheels
of my horses! O Pallas, how you have ruined me! 1265

STREP. But what evil has Tlepolemus²⁰⁵ ever done you?

2ND CRED. Do not mock me, sir, but bid your son
to give me back the money he got,
especially since I've fared so badly.

STREP. What money is this?

2ND CRED. That which he borrowed. 1270

STREP. Then you really *are* badly off, at least as it seems to me.

2ND CRED. Yes, I fell out of a chariot while I was driving horses,
by the gods!

STREP. Why are you babbling, as if you had fallen off an ass?²⁰⁶

2ND CRED. Am I babbling if I wish to get my money back?

STREP. There's no way you yourself²⁰⁷ could be in health.

2ND CRED. Why? 1275

STREP. You seem to me like one whose brain has been shaken.

2ND CRED. And *you* seem to *me*, by Hermes, about to receive a
summons

if you won't give back the money.

STREP. Tell me now,

do you believe that Zeus always rains fresh
water on each occasion, or does the sun 1280
draw the same water back up from below?

²⁰⁴Strepsiades perhaps refers to a lamenting god in one of the tragedies of the poet Carcinus, none of whose works has survived.

²⁰⁵Xenocles, one of the sons of Carcinus, was also a tragic poet, and his lost *Licymnius* is thought to be the source of the creditor's lines 1264–1265. The tragic persona adopted by the creditor is Licymnius, an old man who was killed by his nephew Tlepolemus, a son of Heracles. The story is told in outline in *Iliad* II.653–670.

²⁰⁶A man who was *apo nou* (out of his mind) was said by the Greeks to have had a fall *ap' onou* (off an ass).

²⁰⁷I.e., you yourself in your mind (as opposed to your bodily injuries).

2ND CRED. I don't know which, nor do I care.

STREP. How then is it just for you to get your money back if you know nothing of the matters aloft?

2ND CRED. Well, if you're short, give me the interest on the money.

1285

STREP. Interest? What beast is that?

2ND CRED. What else but that the money always becomes more and more by month and by day as time flows along?

STREP. Beautifully spoken.

What then? Do you believe that there is more sea now than before?

1290

2ND CRED. No, by Zeus, but equal, for it's not just for there to be more.²⁰⁸

STREP. Then how,

you miserably unhappy man, does *it* become no more, though rivers flow into it, while *you*.

seek to make your money more?

1295

Won't you prosecute yourself away from my house?

[*Calling into the house.*]

Bring me the goad!

[*A servant enters with an animal prod, then exits.*]

2ND CRED. [*in a loud voice*].

I call for witnesses to this!

STREP. [*prodding him with the goad*].

Move on! What are you waiting for? Won't you ride on, you thoroughbred?

2ND CRED. Is this not hubris indeed?

STREP. [*goading him across the stage*].

Will you pull? I'll prod

and goad you in the ass, you tracehorse!

1300

[*Exit second creditor, at a run.*]

Do you flee? I was bound to get you moving with those wheels of yours and chariots!

[*Strepsiadesturns to his house. While he finishes his interrupted feast, the Chorus comes forward and sings.*]

CHORUS.

Such a thing it is to be in love with low matters! [*Strophe.*]

For this old man, having fallen passionately in love,

wishes to cheat them

1305

²⁰⁸I.e., it is not the appropriate or normal conduct for the sea to increase its size.

of the money he borrowed.
 And it must be
 that some matter will come upon
 this sophist today which will make him
 suddenly come upon some evil for the knaveries he has begun. 1310
 For I suppose he will presently find just what [Antistrophe.]
 he was seeking long ago:

that his son is clever
 at speaking notions opposed
 to the just things, so as 1315
 to defeat everyone, whomever he
 associates with, even when he speaks
 all-villainous things. But perhaps, perhaps
 he will even wish
 him to be voiceless. 1320
 [Strepsiades bursts out of the house, still carrying his tall drinking mug,
 which he drops outside the door.]

STREP. Oh! Oh!
 O neighbors and kinsmen and demesmen!
 Defend me with every art: I'm being beaten!
 Oh me, miserably unhappy! My head and jaw!
 [Pheidippides enters.]

Wretch, do you beat your father?
 PHEID. Yes, father. 1325

STREP. [to the audience].
 Do you see him agreeing that he beats me?²⁰⁹
 PHEID. Certainly I do.

STREP. Wretch! Parricide! Housebreaker!
 PHEID. Say again that I am these same things and more.
 Do you know that I delight in being called many bad things?

STREP. You're hyper-bugged!
 PHEID. Sprinkle me with many roses! 1330
 STREP.

Do you beat your father?
 PHEID. Yes, and I will make it clearly apparent, by Zeus,
 that I was beating you with justice.

STREP. Most wretched one,
 how could beating a father be with justice?
 PHEID. I will demonstrate it and defeat you by speaking.

²⁰⁹Father-beating was a serious crime, and Strepsiades calls on witnesses as though undertaking the first step of a lawsuit against his son.

STREP. You will defeat me in *this*?

PHEID. Yes, greatly and easily. 1335

But choose which of the two speeches you wish to be spoken.

STREP. What two speeches indeed!

PHEID. The stronger or the weaker.

STREP. I *did* teach you, by Zeus, my dear,
how to speak against the just things, if you *are*
going to persuade me that it is just and noble 1340
for a father to be beaten by his sons.

PHEID. I do suppose that I will persuade you, so that
when you have heard it, not even you yourself will say any-
thing against it.

STREP. In fact, I do wish to hear what you will say.

CHORUS [*song, addressing Strepsiades*].

Your work, elderly one, is to give thought to how [Strophe.] 1345
you will overcome this man,
since he would not be so unrestrained unless
he were confident in something.

But there is something by which he is emboldened:
the audacity of the man is clear. 1350

[*The leading Cloud, to Strepsiades.*]

But you must now tell the Chorus out of what the fight first
began to arise. (You will do this anyway.)

STREP. All right, then, from where we first began to rail at each
other,

I will tell you. We were feasting, as you know,
and first I bade him to take the lyre 1355
and sing a song of Simonides: "The Ram, How He Was Shorn."²¹⁰
Right away he said that it was old-fashioned to play the lyre
and sing while drinking, just like a woman grinding barley.²¹¹

PHEID. Yes, shouldn't you have been struck and trampled on
right away back then
when you bade me to sing, as if you were providing a feast for
grasshoppers?²¹² 1360

²¹⁰The traditional lyric poet Simonides, a contemporary of Pindar and Aeschylus, lived during the Persian Wars. "The Ram, How He Was Shorn" apparently told of the defeat of a mighty wrestler called Crius ("Ram"). It was customary at old-fashioned Athenian banquets for a guest to accompany himself at singing one of the good old songs.

²¹¹Women often sing simple songs as they perform monotonous manual work.

²¹²Grasshoppers, according to legend, spend all their time singing and do not need to eat or drink (*Phaedrus* 259c). Perhaps there is an allusion to the old-fashioned "grasshoppers" of line 984.

STREP. Such are the things he was also saying then inside, just as he is now.

He also declared that Simonides is a bad poet.

And at first I put up with him—with difficulty, but nevertheless I did.

Well, then I bade him to take a sprig of myrtle and recite some verses from Aeschylus for me.²¹³ And then right away he said,

"I believe Aeschylus is first among poets:

full of noise, incoherent, wordy, bombastic."

And then how do you suppose my heart swelled up!

Nevertheless I bit my spirit and said, "Well, recite something

from one of these newer ones, whatever wise things are there."

Right away he sang some passages from Euripides, how (defend us from evil!) a brother had intercourse with his sister from the same mother.²¹⁴

And I no longer put up with him, but right away I struck out at him with many bad and shameful names. And from there, as was likely,

we hurled word upon word at each other. Then he leaps on me, and then he was pounding and crushing and choking and battering me!

PHEID. Wasn't it just, since you don't praise most wise Euripides?

STREP. *Him* most wise? You—what shall I call you?

But again, I'll be beaten again!

PHEID. Yes, by Zeus, and it would be with justice.

STREP. How could it be just? For I'm the one who nurtured you,

O shameless one, perceiving what you had in mind when you used to lisp everything.

If you'd say "bryn," I'd recognize it and offer you something to drink.

²¹³Apparently it was traditional for those who sang at banquets to do so with a branch of myrtle in the hand. Aeschylus was *the* old-fashioned tragedian. It was not usual to recite tragic poetry at banquets, but Strepsiades is compromising: Pheidippides does not have to sing lyric poetry if only he will recite good old Aeschylus.

²¹⁴The tragedy is *Aeolus*, of which only fragments survive. The incest was committed by Aeolus' children, Macareus and Canace. Strepsiades emphasizes "from the same mother" because Athenian law permitted marriage between children of the same father but different mothers. Euripides was regarded as a daring, unconventional, even atheistic poet (cf. Aristophanes' *Frogs* and *Thesmophoriazusae* 450–451).

And when you'd ask for "mamman," I'd come and bring bread to you.

No sooner would you say "ca-ca" than I would take you through the door

and carry you outside, holding you out in front of me. But now *you*, strangling me

1385

as I was shouting and crying out that I needed to crap, didn't have the decency

to carry me outside, you wretch,

through the door. Instead, while I was being choked,

I made "ca-ca" right there!

1390

CHORUS [*song*].

I suppose that the hearts of the youths [*Antistrophe*.²¹⁵]
are leaping at what he will say.

For if, having done such deeds as these,
he persuades him by his chatter,

I wouldn't even give a chick-pea for the
skin of old men.

1395

[*The leading Cloud addresses Pheidippides.*]

Your work, you mover and heaver of novel words,

is to seek some way of persuasion so that you will seem to speak
just things.

PHEID. How pleasant it is to consort with novel and shrewd
matters

and to be able to look down on the established laws!

1400

For *I*, when I was applying my mind to horsemanship alone,
couldn't even say three phrases before I went wrong.

But now that he himself has made me stop these things

[*indicating the tinkery*]

and I am associating with subtle notions and speeches and
ponderings,

I do suppose that I will teach him that it is just to punish one's
father.

1405

STREP. Then keep on with your horses, by Zeus, since it is better
for me

to nurture a four-horse team than to be beaten and battered!

PHEID. I'll pursue that point of my speech where you interrupted
me,

and first I will ask you this: did you beat me when I was a boy?

²¹⁵This antistrophe, introducing Pheidippides' rebuttal, corresponds to the strophe preceding Strepsiades' statement (1345–1350).

- STREP. Yes, I did; I was well-intentioned and concerned for you.
PHEID. Then tell me, 1410
isn't it also just for me likewise to be well-intentioned toward you
and to beat you, since in fact to be well-intentioned is to beat?
For why should *your* body be unchastised by blows,
but not mine? And in fact I too was born free.²¹⁶
Children weep: does it seem fit to you that a father not weep?²¹⁷ 1415
You will say that it is the law that this is a boy's work,
but *I* would say in return, "Old men are children twice."
And it's more appropriate for the old to weep than the young,
inasmuch as it's less just for them to do wrong.
STREP. But nowhere is it the law that the father suffer this. 1420
PHEID. Wasn't he who first set down this law a man
like you and me, and didn't he persuade those of long ago by
speaking?
Is it any less allowable for me too, then, to set down in turn
for the future a novel law for sons to beat their fathers in return?
As for the blows that we got before the law is set down, 1425
we dismiss them, and we give them our past thrashings gratis.
Consider the chickens and the other beasts:
they defend themselves against their fathers. Yet how do they
differ
from us, except that they do not write decrees?
STREP. What then? Since you imitate the chickens in all things, 1430
won't you eat dung and sleep on a perch?
PHEID. It's not the same, sir, and it wouldn't seem so to Socrates,
either.
STREP. In view of this, don't beat me. Otherwise you'll only have
yourself to blame someday.
PHEID. How so?
STREP. Because it's just for me to punish you
and for you to punish your son, if you have one.
PHEID. But if I don't have one, 1435
I'll have wept in vain, and you'll have died with the laugh on me.
STREP. [*to the old men in the audience*].
To me, O men of my age, he seems to speak just things,

²¹⁶A free man was permitted to strike his children, but it was forbidden for them to strike him (cf. n. 209). "Born" is *phyein*, related to *physis*, "nature."

²¹⁷This line is an adaptation of Euripides, *Alcestis* 691, where Pheres indignantly refuses to die in the place of his son Admetus, saying: "You delight in seeing the light: does it seem to you that a father does not delight?"

and to me at least, it also seems fitting to concede to them²¹⁸ what is fair.

For it's proper for us to weep if we do things that aren't just.

PHEID. Consider yet another notion.

STREP. No, for I'll be ruined! 1440

PHEID. And yet perhaps you won't be annoyed at suffering what you've just suffered.

STREP. How so? Teach me how you'll benefit me from this.

PHEID. I'll beat my mother too, just as I did you.

STREP. What are you saying? What are you saying?

This other one is a still greater evil!

PHEID. But what if I defeat you

by means of the weaker speech, saying 1445
that one *should* beat one's mother?

STREP. If you do this, then nothing
will prevent you from throwing yourself
into the Pit²¹⁹

along with Socrates 1450
and the weaker speech!

[*To the Chorus.*]

I have suffered these things because of you, O Clouds,
from referring all my affairs to you.

CHORUS [*the leading Cloud speaking*].

No, you yourself are responsible for these things by yourself,
because you twisted yourself into villainous affairs. 1455

STREP. Then why didn't you tell me this back then
instead of stirring up an old and rustic man?

CHORUS. We do this on each occasion to whomever
we recognize as being a lover of villainous affairs,
until we throw him into evil 1460
so that he may know dread of the gods.

STREP. Oh me! This is villainous, O Clouds, but just.
For I shouldn't have deprived them of the money
I borrowed.

[*To Pheidippides.*]

So now, dearest one, come with me
and destroy the wretch Chaerephon and Socrates, 1465
who have deceived you and me!

PHEID. But I wouldn't do injustice to my teachers.

²¹⁸Them: the youth.

²¹⁹The bodies of executed criminals were thrown into "the Pit," a place just outside the walls of Athens.

STREP. Yes, yes! Have awe before ancestral Zeus!

PHEID. See! "Ancestral Zeus"! How ancient you are!

Is there any Zeus?

STREP. There is!

PHEID. No, there isn't, since 1470

Vortex is king, having driven out Zeus.

STREP. He has *not* driven him out, but I supposed he had
[*pointing to the drinking goblet lying on the ground*]
because of this "vortex" here.²²⁰ Ah me, what a wretch I am
for holding that *you*, earthenware, were a god!

PHEID.

Be deranged and babble here by yourself! 1475

[*Exit.*]

STREP. Oh me! What derangement! How mad I was,
when I even threw out the gods because of Socrates!
But dear Hermes,²²¹ in no way be angry with me
and don't batter me, but forgive me
for being out of my mind with prating. 1480

And become my fellow counselor: should I prosecute them
with an indictment, or what seems fitting to you?
[*Pause.*]

You advise me correctly in not letting me stitch up a lawsuit,
but rather to set the house of the praters on fire
as quickly as possible.

[*Calling to a slave inside the house.*]

Come here, come here, Xanthias! 1485

Come outside with a ladder and bring a hoe!

[*Xanthias enters with this equipment.*]

Next go up onto the thinkery and
tear off the roof (if you love your master)
until you throw the house down upon them!



²²⁰The word *dinos* may mean either "vortex" or "goblet." Apparently Strepsiades misunderstood Socrates' assertion (that vortex [*dinos*] replaces Zeus, who does not even exist) to mean that the statue of Zeus was replaced by a goblet (*dinos*).

There is controversy over what Strepsiades points to on the stage. Our stage directions at 1320 and here indicate that he refers to a goblet that he himself dropped on the ground when he came out of the house. Another opinion, widely accepted by modern scholars, proposes that Strepsiades points to a large goblet (symbolizing Vortex) which stands next to the door of the thinkery, occupying the place of the statue of Hermes which regularly stood by the entrance of Athenian homes.

²²¹It is not clear whether Strepsiades addresses a bust of Hermes outside his door or whether he simply looks off into the distance. Strepsiades certainly thinks or pretends that he hears Hermes at 1483.

[*Xanthias climbs up the ladder and begins to hack off the roof tiles with the hoe. Strepsiades again shouts into his house.*]

Someone bring me a lighted torch!

1490

[*Another slave enters with a torch, hands it to Strepsiades, and exits.*]

I too will make one of them pay the penalty today

to me, even if they are such great boasters!

[*Strepsiades ascends the ladder with the torch and begins to set fire to the rafters exposed where the tiles are being hacked away by Xanthias.*]

STUDENT [*within*]. Oh! Oh!

STREP. Your work, torch, is to send forth much flame!

STUDENT [*rushing out of the smoke-filled thinkery and seeing Strepsiades on the roof*].

You, fellow, what are you doing?

STREP. What am I doing? What else but holding subtle conversation with the beams of the house?

1495

2ND STUDENT [*comes out; the remaining students emerge over the next several lines*].

Oh me! Who's burning down our house?

STREP. The one whose cloak you took.

2ND STUDENT. You'll destroy us, you'll destroy us!

STREP. Yes, that's the very thing I do wish for, unless my hoe betrays my hopes or I first fall somehow and break my neck.

1500

SOC. [*coming out*].

You there on the roof! Really, what are you doing?

STREP. "I tread on air and contemplate the sun."

SOC. Oh me, alas! Wretched me, I'll be choked!

2ND STUDENT. And I, miserably unhappy me, will be burned up!

1505

STREP. Yes, for why is it that you were hubristic toward the gods and were looking into the seat of the Moon?

HERMES²²² [*the god himself appears*].

After them! Strike! Hit them because of many things, but most of all since I know that they were doing injustice to the gods!

[*The thinkery is in flames. Climbing down the ladder, Strepsiades and his slave pursue Socrates and the students out of the theater.*]

CHORUS. Lead the way out, for we have chorused in due measure today.

1510

[*The Clouds retire and exit.*]

²²²Some manuscripts and most modern scholars deny that Hermes appears at all. They attribute Hermes' lines to Strepsiades. The reading of Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes*, p. 46, is followed here.